

ADVENTURES OF THE LAST EARTHMAN IN HIS SEARCH FOR LOVE by
Robert F. Young ● SEED by William Rotsler ● OF COURSE by Betsy Curtis

June 1973

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SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

ALL STORIES NEW-NO REPRINTS

JUNE, 1973

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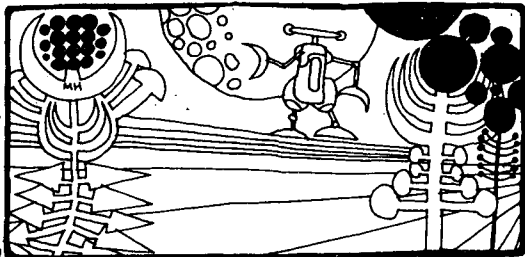
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**TED
WHITE**

EDITORIAL



TIME TO REVIEW SOME BASICS. One of the factors which I as an editor of this magazine must take into account is the simple fact that while I've been here for four years now, some of you are picking the magazine up this issue for the first time.

I've seen surveys which suggest that the largest part of a science fiction magazine's readership is totally replaced over a five year period—that the turnover is over 90%. But although I have done my best to turn this magazine (and its sister magazine, FANTASTIC STORIES) into a avenue for two-way communication between the editor and the readers, and although our reader response is probably stronger as a result of this than that of any other sf magazine's, the sad fact is that I hear from only a tiny proportion of you—around one half of one percent of the total readership, in fact. And those of you who *do* write are not, I would guess, typical of our average reader. You are not typical, because you *do* write letters—and because many of you continue to write letters every issue (or nearly so). You are not typical, because your interest is less casual and will probably survive that five-year-turnover period intact.

The danger lies in the fact that since my involvement with this magazine is linear and cumulative, and that of the magazine's more vocal readers is also linear and cumulative, I may lose contact with the fact that most of you came in in the middle, so to speak. I may take for granted certain already stated and established basics in the discussions I

launch here, and those readers whose letters you'll find in the letter column may also take these basics for granted, while newer readers are left with a sense of disorientation and confusion.

A certain amount of this is inevitable, I think. I cannot edit each issue as though it was my first; I cannot endlessly repeat myself here. But quite obviously from time to time it is a good thing to pause, take stock, and restate a few of the basic assumptions which underlie these editorials. That this time has come again is underscored by the following brief letter which I received from Leah A. Zeldes, of Oak Park, Michigan:

Dear Mr. White,

I have long been an avid S.F. reader, but have only recently been initiated to the wonders of magazines such as yours. Because I am so new to this medium of science fiction, I am unfamiliar with some of the terminology.

What confuses me most is the concept of "fandom". Exactly what is it? What distinguishes a "fan" from a professional? And a "neofan" from an ordinary "fan"? Also, what is a "fanzine"? What is the difference between a "fanzine" and a professional S.F. magazine?

Something else I don't quite understand are the S.F. conventions. Why are they held, and what happens at them? Who generally attends the conventions?

I realize you are a very busy man, Mr.

(Cont. on page 115)

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF MAN

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Do unseen powers influence your life?
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had hoped for?
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Ten years ago the stories of Robert F. Young were often to be found in the pages of this magazine. Now, after too long an absence, Young returns with a story of considerable subtlety and power, a story based upon the confrontation of mutually opposed subjective and objective value systems, their collision and their resolution—all within the delicate framework of—

THE ADVENTURES OF THE LAST EARTHMAN . . .

ROBERT F. YOUNG

I AM THE LAST EARTHMAN.

I walk into bars, ostensibly to drink, but actually to observe my fellow men, none of whom are wholly human but some of whom have dregs of humanism remaining in their glass. My glass is

Illustrated by JEFF JONES



full; I alone am human. I am the last Earthman.

I sit there in the early hours of the night before the evening blooms, and drink my drinks and listen to my thoughts. The bar I frequent most is called The Candlelight Cafe and derives its name from candles burning in rose-colored globes along its walls. The bar itself is square, which is ideal for an observer. I go there every Saturday night, to observe.

It is Saturday night now, and I am coming through the door. I see myself as I enter. I am quite tall, and time has been kind to me. I hold myself militarily erect, and my mien, my appearance are those of a much younger man. I do not stand out from the crowd; neither do I blend into it. This is as it should be: an observer should not be gray. I am wearing a dark-blue coat and slacks of a similar but slightly lighter hue; as it is cold outside (the month is March), I have a maroon muffler around my neck. Color, but neither too little nor too much. Grayness is for those who wish to efface themselves, and this I could never bear to do—not even in the company of my enemies.

It is early yet, and the bar is not yet full. The band has arrived, but has not yet begun to play. There are a number of empty barstools. I choose one next to two girls who are obviously together. I do not do this because they are unescorted and I intend to make advances, but because the location affords the best available view of the room.

I order vodka and orange from one of the three bartenders on duty. I light up a cigarette and settle back to observe.

I AM THE LAST EARTHMAN.

During the latter years of the Great War at the time when the invasion from the stars occurred I was operating a one-man radio station on a lonely Arctic island. When the aliens came down from their orbiting spaceships and entered into the minds of the peoples of Earth, my isolation saved me from suffering a similar ignominious fate. Other factors as well may have contributed to my salvation, but this is mere conjecture.

The invasion was both silent and subtle. I was unaware that it had taken place, even after I got back to Base. No marked changes were evident either in the troops stationed there or in the inhabitants of the mainland town where Base was located. The changes were to come later.

At length the war ended—whether the aliens expedited or prolonged it, I do not know—and I returned home. Only then did I detect changes in my fellow human beings. While primarily these changes had to do with sexual conduct, they involved others aspects of human behavior as well. But I ascribed them to the war. All wars bring about changes, and the changes are never for the better. I remained as unaware of the aliens' presence as they—thankfully—remained unaware of mine.

THE GIRL NEAREST TO ME notices that I am smoking and have no ashtray. She shoves hers closer to me so that we can share it. I thank her for the courtesy, and our eyes meet.

EVEN NOW, looking back, I am unable to pinpoint the exact moment when I

first realized that I was the last Earthman—that everyone in the world except myself had in his or her mind a transparent alien symbiont of which he/she was utterly unaware. Probably my awakening to the truth was geared to the increasing influence these tiny creatures from the stars had upon their hosts, and became total only when that influence reached a degree where human mores were replaced by alien ones—a degree where humans, to all intents and purposes, *became* aliens.

“The shepherd in Virgil,” wrote Dr. Johnson in his letter to Lord Chesterfield, “grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.” I, too, grew at last acquainted with Love, and found that the rocks had fallen upon him and become his tomb.

THERE IS A FLUTTER of excitement along the opposite section of the bar. Today is the birthday of one of the waitresses, and in honor of the occasion the chef has baked her a cake. On it burns a big candle bearing the numerals “21”.

The band strikes up *Happy Birthday*, the male vocalist sings the words, and afterward everyone applauds. Her face aglow, the waitress blows out the candle, then cuts the cake into bite-size wedges. They are passed from hand to hand around the bar, and one of them eventually finds its way to me. The girl I am sitting next to starts to hand it to me, but I say, “No thanks,” and she passes it back. Our eyes meet again, and she says, “I wish I were twenty-one,” and I tell her that I thought she was, which is true, although I can see

now that she will never know twenty-nine again, and probably not thirty either.

HUMANISM IS NOT a quality that can be totally obliterated, and some aliens have more than mere dregs remaining in their glass. My ex-wife’s glass, for example, was 1/3 full. I married her not long after my return from the war, having fallen in love with her at first sight. Naturally our marriage could not endure for long, but that it endured for as long as it did was owing to the unusual amount of humanism her glass contained. But in the last analysis, it contained too little, and before five years had passed she walked out on me without a word, bringing our tragic misalliance to an end.

Fortunately, a symbiont cannot see into another host’s mind, and thus cannot tell whether that mind is occupied without actually entering it, something one of them would never dream of doing for such a reason, since they assume in their arrogance that the takeover of the human race is complete. On the rare occasions when they wish to communicate with one another, they do so via the hosts’ vocal chords or hands, and always in such a manner that the host thinks *he* is communicating. Thus, a symbiont asking questions of another has no way of knowing definitely whether the answers emanate from the host or the host’s occupant. It is to this lack of direct contact on their part that I owe my continued independence. My ex-wife knew I was different from the rest of the human race—in fact, she frequently said so. But the symbiont in her mind never suspected why. Thank-

fully, no children resulted from our not-quite-five years of cohabitation.

Thankfully, also, I am an only child. My parents were too busy spiting each other to raise a large family. They separated when I was in high school; shortly afterward, the war broke out, and I enlisted. After I came out of the service, I never went near either of them again. I never will.

THE GIRL I am sitting next to (I continue to think of her as a girl although I realize now that she is a mature woman) has a remarkable way of looking at a person. She seems to pour all of herself into a single brief glance and reach out and touch you with her eyes. I find myself wondering whether it is a cultivated characteristic or a natural one. I decide that it does not matter.

All of the barstools are occupied by this time, and we have moved our own closer together. She tells me she has a fourteen-year old son and is thirty-five, not twenty-one. She adds that 'she is separated from her husband. I do not tell her my age; obviously she has taken me for a younger man, and I see no point in disenchanting her. Her sister, she says, is thirty-six, and is separated from her husband also. I realize that the other girl is the sister she is referring to, and I note the resemblance between them. The other girl's black hair is elaborately coiffed, and she is Junoesque and strikingly attractive. The girl next to me is Junoesque, too, but she has brown hair instead of black, and there is a touch of gentleness about her face. I know of course that it is a false gentleness; but false or not, I find

this alien female far more appealing than most of her kind, and in the recesses of my mind, in the cold clinical compartment that I reserve for reasoning and which is as yet unaffected by my vodkas and orange, a red light begins to flash on and off.

On and off. On and off. On and off.

THAT I NEVER once betrayed my true nature during the years that antedated my awakening to the truth is largely attributable to two factors: (1) unaware that I was the last Earthman, I could not directly betray the fact; and (2) unaware that everyone in the world except myself was an alien, I could not very well allude to anyone as such.

It is only since my awakening that my danger has become acute, for now I am in possession of a weapon with which I can easily destroy myself, directly or by implication. Therefore, I must constantly beware of making a slip of the tongue, and never let myself be drawn into discussions that touch upon the subject I am most sensitive about.

THE GIRL AND I are sitting very close together now, and we smoke and talk and drink and laugh, and look frequently into each other's eyes. All the while, the red warning light in the clinical compartment of my mind continues to flash. On and off. On and off. A second rank of drinkers has formed behind the first, and the three bartenders are pressed to keep up with the increasing demand for drinks. The band plays louder and louder, and the music intermingles with the voices and the laughter and the smoke.

On and off. On and off. On and off.

ALTHOUGH TO DATE I have been successful in hiding my true nature, I am afraid that someday I shall inadvertently expose it. This is because of my irresistible urge to observe aliens when their guards are down, and because the only way I can do so without attracting attention to myself is by behaving as they do. This often entails my drinking far more than I should, and augments the odds on my making a slip of the tongue and my being drawn into discussions that involve treading on dangerous ground. Equally as distressing, it frequently robs me of my usual reserve and causes me to experience a sense of oneness with these morally degenerate creatures who masquerade as human beings.

More distressing yet is my proclivity to blank out after I reach a certain stage. Often on the day following an evening of prolonged observation I am unable to recall what I said or what I did during the final stages, or even how I got home.

A THIRD RANK of drinkers has formed behind the second. It is comprised largely of late-comers who have no real hope of penetrating as far as the bar and who are content to stand and gawp at what is going on. This rank causes me no concern; it is the second rank that I must beware of, or rather that part of it immediately behind me. But despite myself, I keep forgetting there are eavesdroppers nearby, and it is only when I periodically visit the men's room that I am reminded of their presence. The girl guards my barstool

for me when I go, and I guard hers for her when she goes. It is an agreeable as well as a practical arrangement.

I buy a round of drinks for her, her sister and myself. During the lull occasioned by the transaction, they begin talking with each other. The sister is cynical, and has mistaken my intentions. "All a man ever sees in a woman is a piece of ass," she says, loudly enough for me to hear. I can tell from the glance she throws in my direction that she thinks such language will shock me, and a while ago it would have. But it does not shock me now, and I look back at her with complete nonchalance. The warning light in the clinical compartment of my mind still flashes on and off, but the flashes are growing weaker and farther apart. It is as though the battery is running down.

WHILE I HAVE ALWAYS thought of the aliens' take-over of the peoples of Earth as an invasion, the term does not truly apply. "Invasion" connotes a concerted, organized action for the purpose of conquest. The take-over of the human race has been nothing of the sort.

To aid myself in comprehending the true nature of the take-over, I have developed an analogy: a fleet of naval vessels anchors off a primitive South Sea island; the admiral grants a week's shore-leave to as many of the enlisted personnel as there are native quarters available and puts the rest on a waiting list, their leave subject to the construction of additional quarters; the sailors swarm over the island in successive waves and after several days make it, to all intents and purposes, their own.

The island in the present instance is Earth; the fleet is an armada of leviathan spaceships from the stars; the native quarters are human hosts; and the sailors are tiny bisexual symbionts who enjoy copulating but cannot do so except vicariously, and a week of whose time equals a century—if not more—of ours. Like most sailors on shoreleave, they are antagonistic, irresponsible, and prone to get drunk.

This is not precisely what occurred—the ways of the alien beings are by their very nature incomprehensible to an Earthman. But it reduces what occurred to dimensions that the human mind can grasp.

THE GIRL'S SISTER remarks that men can't really be blamed for regarding women the way they do, nor women for regarding men the way *they* do. "After all," she says, "what else is there in life but sex?" I am reminded of what Hemingway said when asked why he no longer wished to live, and I repeat his words as well as I can remember them.

ALTHOUGH IN THE BEGINNING there were not nearly enough hosts to accommodate the fleet's enlisted personnel, the upswing in population that followed the war soon eased the shortage, and by now, in the year of our Lord 1973, most of the sailors are on leave. Someday, if proliferation continues at its present rate and there is no reason to suppose it will not, there will be more hosts than there are sailors to occupy them, but I do not think that this will happen in my lifetime. In a perverse way, I hope that it does not: being the last Earthman may not be an enviable distinction, but

it is the only one I have ever known.

One thing about the symbionts has always puzzled me. Clearly from their very nature they can exist outside the mind of a host or outside the specialized environments of the ships for only a limited period of time. What, then, does one of them do when its host dies and it must wait to be assigned to another? Does it return to its ship or does it take up temporary quarters and wait till the assignment comes through?

Obviously, it must return to its ship. No human mind could accommodate two alien sailors for more than a few moments, and, discounting the minds of subhuman creatures, there would be no other quarters available.

IN ESSENCE, what Hemingway said (or is reputed to have said) was that life is not worth living unless a man can work well, and enjoy food, booze and sex. This coincides in part with what the girl's sister said, and she is pleased to have her credo endorsed by so famous a personage.

I realize that I have implied that I, too, endorse the doctrine that Sex is All—a tenet that goes against the grain of my strongest principles. I hasten to set the two sisters straight. "While it's natural that sex should play a major role in our lives," I tell them, "it's unnatural that we should blow it up into an immense red balloon and parade down the street with it, shouting, 'Hallelujah!'"

At this point I notice that I have two full vodkas and orange sitting on the bar, and I pause long enough to down them. Abruptly the room seems to shift, the rose-colored candlelight to

take on a deeper hue . . . Subtly, the space which I and the two sisters occupy becomes the focal point of the room, of the world, of the universe; all else spreads infinitely out from this tiny rose-colored atoll like a meaningless and softly murmuring sea. The warning light in the clinical compartment of my mind gives a final flicker and goes out; simultaneously, the scene seems to freeze. It is as though time has stopped; and yet, although it has stopped in one sense, it goes ineluctably on in another—

THE TWO SISTERS are staring at me. The eavesdroppers have moved in closer. I do not even lower my voice. "To regard sex as an end in itself is an alien, not a human attitude," I say loudly. "In order for it truly to become an end, it must first be blessed by Love. But the human race has murdered Love and cut off his head and his right hand. They have adopted the values of drunken sailors from the stars and thrown away their own. They have transformed the Earth into a cosmic Candlelight Cafe. They have *become* aliens—"

I pause. The two sisters are putting on their coats; they are moving on, they say, to another cafe. They tell me politely that they have enjoyed talking with me, but they do not invite me to go with them. I invite myself. But somehow by the time I reach the door they are all the way across the street and climbing into their car. I watch them drive off, feeling like a fool; then I get into my own car and somehow drive the half dozen miles to the efficiency-apartment complex where I live. My

tiredness overwhelms me as I climb the stairs to my flat. Somehow I find my way to my bedroom, and undress and get into bed. Sleep descends upon me like a sledgehammer the moment I turn out the light.

I awake with a black headache. I lie there with my eyes closed, the events of the preceding evening running through my mind like an old movie. When the movie reaches the part where I downed the two vodkas and orange in a row, the film begins to flicker. A moment later, it breaks.

I force myself to open my eyes, to confront the day. My bed-stand clock says 10:25; late-morning sunlight fills the room. I get up, wash, dress and go into the kitchen. I put water on for coffee. While waiting for it to boil, I run the movie through again. The film breaks in exactly the same place.

I go into the living room and look through the window down into the parking lot. A light dusting of snow covers the withered grass and the parked cars. My car is standing in the slot reserved for it, equidistant from two others. This reassures me, but not very much.

Again, I run the movie through my mind. Again, the film breaks in the same place. It has a sound-track, but not a very good one. In the final scene I am talking loudly. I am saying something about sex being a big red balloon. In God's name, what did I say after that?

In God's name. In God's name. In God's name.

DURING THE FINAL YEAR of our marriage, my wife accused me of drinking

more than I should, and to humor her I went to see a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist, after a number of lengthy interviews, told me that I drank to excess because I had erected a barrier of fear and mistrust between myself and the rest of the world and could breach it only by resorting to alcohol in large quantities. He said that I was incapable of establishing meaningful relationships, and that it was my periodic need to establish them that caused me to breach the barrier. Basically, he said I drank because of a suppressed need to be loved. My problem was compounded, he said, by a Victorian attitude toward sex which I had acquired during my youth and which I had superimposed upon a perfectly normal sexual urge.

He recommended group-therapy, and offered to make the necessary arrangements. I never went near him again.

AT NOON, I force myself to drive to the shopping center for a Sunday paper. Every other second I check my rearview mirror to see whether anyone is following me. I know that I am overreacting—that even if I did betray myself last night I need fear nothing from symbionts who already have hosts—but I cannot help myself.

Traces of snow lie along the curbs and upon the hoods and roofs of parked cars. The sky is a brisk bright blue. I buy the paper quickly and hurry home. But I do not read it—I watch TV instead. Each time I hear a car pull into the parking lot I go to the window and look down, fearful that someone has come for me. I keep telling myself that

no one will, but it does no good.

It should be obvious to me by this time that I did *not* betray myself, for if I had I would already be occupied. Word of my availability would have been sent out immediately to the fleet via whatever means of Earth-to-space communication the symbionts employ, and a sailor—either one waiting to go on leave or one recently vacated by the death of its host—would have been informed of whatever it was I said that impugned my alienness, and tentatively assigned to me.

But if there were a sailor in my mind, would I be aware of the fact? Wouldn't I, like everyone before me, simply regard my new values as normal and simultaneously regard my old ones as *abnormal*? Moreover, wouldn't it already have cancelled out my awareness of it and its kind, and wouldn't it have supplied my memory with what I said last night so that when the need arose I would be able either to deny or to compensate for my words?

No, there is no symbiont in my mind. If there were, I wouldn't be sitting here wondering what I said after I blanked out—I would know what I said. And I wouldn't be sitting here worrying about becoming an alien—I would be one.

FOR MANY YEARS after my awakening I entertained doubts as to the validity of my conclusions concerning the takeover of the Earth by alien sailors from the stars. I was certain my reasoning had been flawless, but until I had some sort of substantiation, the truth which I had so painstakingly and conscientiously arrived at could be classified only as theory. *This despite*

the fact that no other single cause could account for the moral degeneration that had taken place in the human race during the decades following the war.

Substantiation finally came during the summer of '70 in the form of the aliens' flagship. I do not know why it descended from the heavens that sultry afternoon in June, but descend it did. It hovered awesomely in the sky, perhaps a mile above the ground, dark and amorphous and sheathed with jagged fire. Trailing behind it, curving through half of the heavens, was its rainbow-hued flag.

It hovered there for no more than a quarter of an hour, then vanished as subtly as it had appeared, seeming to disperse into the sky. Those of my alien-occupied contemporaries who also must have seen it probably ascribed it to natural phenomena. They could not have admitted the evidence of their eyes even if they had wanted to. And so the alien flagship came and went, and only I—the last Earthman—bore witness to the event.

I DO NOT take a drink till mid-afternoon. For convenience, I bring the bottle into the living room and keep it beside me as I watch TV. Toward midnight, I doze off, and when I awake the screen is empty. I mix a good strong nightcap to see me through the rest of the night. I make certain all the doors are locked; then I undress and go to bed.

I put in a terrible day at the insurance agency where I work. When at last it is done, I buy a sixpack of beer and go directly home. I spend the evening drinking beer and watching TV. I do not

feel up to anything else. After I finish the last bottle, I go straight to bed.

By Tuesday I am feeling better, and the old movie, with the exception of a few disconnected scenes, has faded from my mind. On Wednesday, my confidence begins coming back. Blank-outs are inexorable, and I shall never know what I said during mine; but I am certain by this time that whatever it was, it did not betray me for what I am.

Thursday and Friday breeze by. I am down to two bottles of beer a night. Saturday morning I sleep late; Saturday night finds me parking my car behind the Candlelight Cafe, looking forward to a pleasant evening of observation.

As I open the barroom door, a sudden thought occurs to me: I am well-known in the Candlelight Cafe, but by face, not by name; *perhaps a symbiont has been assigned to me after all, but does not know where to find me and is waiting for someone to point me out!*

Waiting, moreover, in the very room I am about to enter.

It is true that my observations of the aliens over the years have led me to conclude that a host would not be able to accommodate two symbionts simultaneously for more than a few moments; but I do not *know* this. Like a number of my other conclusions, it is, of necessity, an assumption.

There is a good chance, then, that I may be walking into a trap.

However, I refuse to be daunted, and step boldly into the room.

Just within the door, I pause.

The two sisters are sitting at the bar. A short distance from them sits one of the drinkers who stood behind me last

Saturday night. All three have turned on their barstools and are facing the door.

However, this is not why I have paused.

It is because they are pointing at me.

I start to turn, intending to bolt from the room. Then I see that in opening the door I have inadvertently let in a big brown dog, and realize it is he the two sisters and the eavesdropper are pointing at, not I.

I stand there feeling like a fool.

THERE MUST be a limit to how high on the slopes of unreason a man can climb; and it must be that when he reaches that limit he stumbles over a commonplace object, loses his footing and comes tumbling back down to earth.

I can think of no other answer.

In my case, the commonplace object is a scene. In the scene, three perfectly ordinary people are pointing at a perfectly ordinary dog which a third person has just let into a perfectly ordinary room. There are other people present, but they do not count.

It is the very ordinariness of this scene that lends it its effect. In one form or another, it has been enacted a thousand—a million times. And perhaps this is why a “last Earthman” won’t fit into it.

Whatever the answer, the fantastic structure which I put together brick by preposterous brick to rationalize my failure to identify with the human race and my inability to adapt to change comes tumbling down around me, and for a devastating moment I see myself as I really am: a man grown old without once having tasted life, hope-

lessly lost in a rapidly changing world, clinging desperately to values he refuses to admit are dead; creating spaceships out of rainclouds, aliens out of hostile looks, and fears out of black hangovers.

AS I TURN miserably to leave, I see that the dog is sitting at my feet, looking up at me. His golden eyes contain a preternatural intelligence. Subtly, the intelligence reaches out and embraces me, drives away my despair. . .

The animal gives a low whine, then slinks through the doorway and out into the night.

I close the door behind him.

Deliberately I walk over to the bar and sit down next to the girl with the brown hair. I buy drinks for her, her sister and myself.

They thank me, but it is clear from their icy looks that they want no part of me. After what I said last Saturday night about alien attitudes and Love being dead and humans living it up like drunken sailors, I do not blame them. Why, I must have been insane! . . .

Well I am sane now. To prove it, both to the two sisters and myself, I make a pass at the one with the brown hair. “Like I said,” says the black-haired one triumphantly, “all a man ever sees in a woman is a piece of ass!”

“What else is there to see?” I ask, and the ice in their eyes starts to melt, and the future, warm and wide and welcoming, spreads out before me like a sunlit plain; and Love, who is not dead after all, steps out of a grove of little trees, and waves. His aspect has changed: he has hooves, his legs are hairy, and from his forehead sprouts a pair of horns.

—ROBERT F. YOUNG

In his "Bohassian Learns" (July, 1971), William Rotsler described the birth of an unusual baby. This time he takes a slightly different approach to another birth... the germination of a—

SEED

WILLIAM ROTSLER

Illustrated by JOE STATON

THE SPORE DRIFTED.

It had been drifting when the star was young. It could drift until the star was cold and yet sometime find fertile ground. It was very old, yet did not live or have memory of its age.

The star drew it. Man was shaggy and had no language when the star caught it with the intangible tendrils of gravity. Mankind was punching rockets

through the atmosphere when the spore entered the blanket of air.

Still it drifted, thrown here and there by vagrant winds and temperature changes. Finally it floated to the earth, a tiny fleck so small you could not see it, to land upon a ripening fruit.

ROBIN BIRGDAHL FELT VERY, very good. She felt slightly sorry for those



classmates of hers that had not found a husband as fine as Ed. There were times when she felt almost smug. Ed was young, only two years older than her twenty-two years, but already he was well-known as an advertising artist. There was talk of him leaving Carson/Ransom/Inc. and going into a free-lance studio with George McLaughlin and Blaine Willans.

Robin sighed and stretched herself tight in the spring sunshine. She felt tawny and sleek. *There's certainly nothing wrong with our sex life, either,* she thought. *We have some good friends, get along with each other's in-laws as much as could be expected, and I have the garden as well.*

The blonde young housewife looked down at the small patch of organically grown vegetables, at the strawberries and the two apricot trees. All very neat, tidy, money-saving and lucious.

There's nothing like vine-ripened and tree-ripened fruit, she told herself with a certain satisfaction. *When we can start having a family it will be especially nice.*

Robin Birgdahl gathered up her worn gardening gloves and walked down the narrow path between the rows of carrots and peas and bent to pull up a carrot, shake the dirt from it and start eating it. She grimaced, spit out some soil and laughed at herself as she washed it off with a garden hose.

She looked up at the trees as she ate and found an early ripening apricot. Smiling, she plucked it and bit into the dripping fruit.

"Ummmm!" she said. "Delicious!"

ED BIRGDAHL POURED a few dollops of

Benedictine and brandy into a glass and handed it to George McLaughlin.

George lifted the glass and said, "A toast!" Ed and Robin smiled and Grace McLaughlin said, "To the motherhood of America!"

"Hey!" said Ed, "This is just one pregnancy, not a population."

"Overpopulation starts at home, he said piously," George said.

"Are you happy?" asked Grace.

Robin blushed slightly and dropped her eyes. "I can't tell you how happy. It's crazy. I have everything. Ed. . .the house. . .Ed's got a new job with some very lovely people. . .a new washer . . .the garden is fine. . .there's a school just down the street. . .I'm sorry for everyone else. I have it all!"

"Wait until the little monster starts cutting up your drapes or spills mush all over Ed's new painting for the Sugarman account."

"You're terrible, George," said Robin. "You hate children."

"I don't hate children. I love children. Especially sautéed, but broiling isn't bad. . ."

"Bleah!" Robin and Grace said together.

"How does Ed feel about it?" asked George. "The proud father and all that."

Ed grinned. "Very proud fatherish."

"When is the happy day?" George asked.

"September 10th to the 15th." Robin said. "Somewhere then."

"Sounds like a booking, not a birthing," George said, smiling.

"Seven months," Ed said.

"Cheers," George said and they all raised their glasses.

ON JUNE 28TH Robin went into labor. "It can't be!" Ed said over the phone. "It's too early! Months too early!"

"It... feels... like... it... ohhh!" Robin gasped into the phone.

"I'm coming right now!" Ed slammed down the phone. *Something is terribly wrong!*

Doctor Alejandro shook his head. "Get her to X-ray."

Ed looked over his shoulder at the shadow pictures of his wife and child. "What does it mean, doctor?" The outlines of her body were clear, but that of the baby was not.

"I don't know and we haven't time to do more. She's into labor!"

"Darling, don't worry," Robin said, clutching Ed's hand between spasms of pain. "It will be a fine baby, a fine son, you wait and see. Everything will be all right."

But it's in the fifth month, thought Ed.

"Have the intensive care ward ready," Doctor Alejandro ordered a nurse. "It's a preemie."

"Don't worry, darling, the baby will be all right," Robin said, then the delivery rooms doors swung closed behind her.

Ed sat in the waiting room, waiting. George and Grace came by. The expressions on their faces were carefully arranged against panic.

"Easy," the doctor said, "she's breaching now... easy... *good god!*"

Ed heard the scream, faint and wavering. He lurched to his feet. "What the hell is that?" He walked out into the hall and looked down through the small rectangular windows in the double doors at the delivery room doors. A

nurse in surgical green backed out, her hand to her mouth.

Ed ran down the hall, his heart leaping.

"You can't go down there!"

A scream. Then another, that of a man. Two nurses came out of the swinging doors, one screaming, one staring blindly. "Oh, my god, oh, my god!"

Ed shouldered them aside and went through the doors. "*Robin!*"

Doctor Alejandro was leaning back against the tangle of some fallen equipment. "Get back!" he shouted.

"My baby, my baby!" Robin was sobbing. "I want my baby!"

The doctor lifted his right arm with his left. There was a bloody stump. "It... it..."

"Jesus Christ—what happened?" Ed stared from Robin to Alejandro as some interns came clattering into the room.

"Get back!" gasped Alejandro, his face white.

"Christ, look at his arm!" an intern gasped, starting forward.

"*No!* Watch out—it's still here!"

Alejandro staggered towards them. He saw Ed and grasped his shirt, gesturing towards the fallen mess around Robin with his stump. "I had to hack it off! It would have swallowed me!" He stared up into Ed's face. "I tried to kill it and it flowed over my hand, over the scapel. I'm sorry, Ed, I... I panicked."

"You tried to kill what?" He refused to believe what he knew.

"I tried to kill your... your baby."

The horror of it was beyond him. Ed simply couldn't grasp it. He pried Dr.

Alejandro's fingers from his shirt and went towards Robin. "Honey. . .?"

Then he saw it.

On the floor, about the size of a football. Red and veined and partially translucent. Something stuck out of it. A human wrist, crudely hacked off, bloody and buried. As Ed stared, the red veined blob moved and the doctor's hand disappeared.

"Ed? Ed, is the baby all right?" Robin's voice was weak.

Ed stared at his son, his. . . *good god*, it was a *thing*! He spun and vomited across some smashed glass.

Dr. Alejandro was giving orders and the interns spread out. "Kill it!" a nurse shrieked as she saw it. Ed's head came up, mouth dripping, to stare at her. All professional calm was gone. She was staring, her mouth working.

One of the interns said, "I'll get it!" and he bent over the thing on the sterile tile floor.

"No!" shouted the others.

"Take it easy," the intern said, using a wide stainless steel tray to slide under the blob of whatever it was that had come from Robin Birgdahl. "I'll get it and—"

The monster rolled swiftly up the tray and over the intern's thumb. He jerked back his hand with a cry of pain and horror. There was a long thin string of red from his thumb to the thing on the tray. Before anyone could move the string thickened as more material flowed up towards him.

The young man gasped and staggered, tripping over a fallen stand and crashing to the floor. He gasped with sudden pain as some of the instruments pierced his back, then screamed with

throat-wrenching horror as the blob of redness flowed towards and over him. His heels drummed on the floor as the others stared, too helpless and stunned to know what to do. One started forward but stopped as Dr. Alejandro croaked a command at him.

The blob flowed upwards to cover the intern's face and in seconds the body was still. More slowly the blob flowed to cover his white-coated figure, absorbing it.

"I'm getting out of here," an intern said. "Call the police!"

"Kill it!" the nurse screamed and bolted into the corridor.

"Ed. . . Ed, what's the matter? What's the noise? Where's my baby?"

The thing covered the intern with red now, spreading out over even his white shoes. Then it pulled back together and there was no longer a man-like shape, only a red blob the size of a footlocker.

"Is the baby all right, Ed?" Robin's voice was weak. "Why doesn't someone answer me? What's going on? I want to nurse my baby! Ed. . . Ed! The baby is all right, isn't it?"

"Yes," Ed said, his throat thick with bile. "Yes, Robin, it's all right. . . take it easy."

"Get her out of here," someone said and two wary interns moved forward to grasp the gurney and pull it back over the smashed glass and tangle of instruments. They watched over their shoulders as the blob sat unmoving.

"Ed. . ."

"Hush, honey, everything is all right. . ."

"Mr. Birgdahl," said an intern at his elbow. "Sir, we've got to stop it. It's your. . . uh. . . your. . . sorry, sir. . . I

don't know what to call it. . ."

Ed stared at the blob that had been his son, a nameless young man, and a doctor's right hand. "Kill it," he said.

"Everyone out!"

Ed backed through the door, staring at the pulsating red blob. It was changing colors, becoming darker. It started to move towards the door and there was a shout and people ran.

Ed tried. He stopped and he tried.

"Son," he said. "Son. . . I'm your father. . ."

Far down the hall Robin screamed. *"Where's my baby? What have you done with my baby?"*

The blob kept moving slowly towards him. Ed broke. It was something he didn't understand and something he feared. He took a step backward. "I'm sorry," he said, "I'm sorry. . ."

A hospital guard lumbered past Ed and stopped at the door. "*Christ!*" he said. He looked around at the others still pressed back against the corridor walls. "What do you want me to do?" he asked, confusion in his voice.

"Kill it!" a nurse said, then she ran down the hall.

"Doc?" the guard asked. Alejandro sagged against a nurse who was putting a tourniquet on his upper arm. He looked at the guard, then at Ed. He nodded.

"*Kill it?*" the guard asked.

"If you can," the doctor said.

The guard took out his gun. "Okay, get back there," he said to the others. "Watch out now." He looked at Dr. Alejandro, who was white and not fully conscious. He hesitated and the blob moved forward again. Someone screamed and the guard shot.

Once, twice he fired, then stared at the blob. It had merely quivered as the bullets struck. Not even the hydrostatic forces had ruptured or slowed it. The guard took a step back, muttered a curse and fired four more times.

He looked hopelessly around at the few that remained. "I. . . I can't kill it," he said.

"Fire," Ed said. "use fire."

"Not in here," a doctor said, staring at the slowly moving mass. "Get it outside. In the parking lot. By the ambulance entrance. Then burn it."

Someone behind Ed was shouting for gasoline. There was the murmur of barely-suppressed panic.

"My god, did you see what it did to Cal? Jesus, it *ate* him!"

"Look out, it's coming out!"

Bodies pressed Ed back until he could no longer see the thing on the floor. He turned abruptly and fought his way back to the other end of the corridor. "Where's my wife?" he demanded of a face he recognized. She pointed dumbly and went through a door marked Recovery Room.

"Oh, Ed, how is the baby? Is it all right?" She was pale and somehow shrunken. She pulled at his hand and pressed it to her breasts. "Oh, Ed, is he beautiful? Why don't they bring him to me? I want to nurse him. Ed?"

"Everything is all right, honey. They're. . . they're taking care of him now." He sat down and rested his head against her arm and she stroked his head.

"We never did decide on a name for him, darling, do you realize that? What shall we name him?"

We'll think of something, he thought.

—WILLIAM ROTSLER

OF COURSE

Betsy Curtis ("Earth to Earth," September, 1972) returns with a brief vignette, the conclusion of which is as startling as it is obvious.

BETSY CURTIS

TO: J. M. SMITH, Master Programmer.

At: Planetary Computer Headquarters.

Re: Excerpts from report by T. L. Jenkins, Coordinator of Extra-Planetary Reports on New Culture Contacts.

... THEY ARE FANTASTIC. ... They call themselves 'people' and 'human' 'men', of course, and their planet 'earth' in each of their thousand or so languages and dialects. ... so small a planet, so many languages! (Of course they show the xenophobic hostilities of groups that do not communicate with each other well. H. R. Tate is to be commended for the language analyses that made it possible for us to communicate with them so adequately.)

... But they show no hesitation in using the term 'earthman' in talking to us—make no distinction between us and them in talking except for 'specifying planet of origin, despite the fact that they have never successfully landed on another planet nor even in their verified history come in contact with 'men' not of 'earth.' There are legends, of course, but none (see L. L. Christopher's report on History and Legend) that specify other-planet origin

for the supposed legendary visitors. ...

... They have ritual combat in literally thousands of forms; and there are commercial enterprises almost entirely devoted to the invention of new forms of it. Sale and distribution of these 'games' is aimed at the immature sociomembers; though, since the adults control the economy (of course, 'control' is a euphemism for 'mismanage'), it is the adults who purchase and give (for educational purposes? We are not certain of this.) the 'games' to the children. ...

... L. B. Franz (report on general cultural organization) suspects a child-dominated culture, though certain familiar phenomena such as ritual child-worship seem to be completely missing. ...

... There is another totally unfamiliar domination at whose meaning we are unable to guess: one computer on the ship was given over to the problem without final useful results. This appears to be the domestication of a number of members of other species for no particular purpose. At least one-fifth of the family units (adult pairs and their immediate offspring—see L. K. Phelps' report) support and care for small avians, pisces, felines, and/or

canines, without visible evidence of any economic return by the members of these species to the humans with whom they make their homes. The humans refer to their 'ownership' of these 'animals', but computations indicate, of course, that the term might well be used in the other direction. The humans, being unable to communicate verbally with any other species, are, or course, ignorant of the other species' considerations about this. It is noteworthy that there is no evidence of the xenophobia cited above between humans and the members of these other species. . . .

. . . . One characteristic of the immature sociomembers which has so far defied purpose-analysis is their strong motivation to achieve acceleration. In their own psycho-cultural studies, these 'people' make little or no mention of this motivation. . . . we can find no activity in their mature lives toward which such experience or motivation could be considered educational, purposive, or pre-adaptational (check R. Q. Tompkins' report of unsuccessful computer use in his report, Budget Analysis). This acceleration motive is expressed in the multiplicity of manufactured equipment for acceleration, *not* to be confused with mere speed. Even the extremely young are given fragmentary circular acceleration-in-air in devices called 'swings,' . . . vehicles offering gravity-driven acceleration on land include 'sleds,' 'skis,' 'slides,' and a variety of wheeled vehicles (see A. B. White's report on juvenile 'play'). . . . similar adult vehicles stress smooth speed and transport convenience rather than acceleration. . . .

some devices catering to the acceleration-motivation in pre-adulthood are so cumbersome and complicated that they are located in special area-consuming aggregations called 'amusement parks' (A. B. White on juvenile 'play'). . . . and yet the phenomenon which has the computer spinning in a vacuum is the almost total lack of interest in acceleration among the true adults, the major portion of whom actually seem to dislike the sensation of acceleration and find no particular use for it. . . .

. . . . 'Uselessness' is a so-far-inexplicable characteristic of a noticeable fragment of 'human' daily existence. The 'people' have obviously noticed this: their ponderous and sophisticated languages all contain words for what they call 'play,' meaning a strongly motivated but otherwise relatively purposeless activity (which term is extended to cover much ritual combat, which is, of course, *not* purposeless, as it is characteristic of all viable cultures) which has no apparent outcome beyond its conclusion, as opposed to 'work' which is activity with a strong pro-survival basis or purpose. 'Play' is certainly not a *contra*-survival activity, but the word has more than mere connotations of no essential connection with survival *at all*. Of course it would be incredible to me if I hadn't seen it. . . .

. . . . So far this report is chiefly explanatory preface to the description of a factor in the lives/bodies/action-potential of these 'men' that sets them apart from all the races we know—that could make them fantastically formidable opponents, should real or ritual conflict between us ever become

necessary to their survival or ours. I give my advice in advance—"Avoid them—withdraw—run—we have currently *no* defense!" . . . As you will see, it hardly matters that these 'humans' are not really aware of the nature of their potential weapon—they have 'noticed' it to the extent that they think it universal and have therefore neglected investigating its nature. . . . My colleagues and I agree on the description, "delicate extra-physical manipulation of probabilities." The 'human's' own evaluation of it can be summed up in the two words, "of course." . . .

. . . . I shall herewith append one example that may represent the whole observable sequence of the action. The very recounting fills me with excitement and terrifying apprehension. . . .

. . . . My host (the adult male of a family unit of adult male, adult female, three immature males and one very immature female) received from his insurance (ritual survival competition on the basis of probable life-expectancy) merchant an unexpected dividend (money signifying a change-in certain financial probabilities—yes, of course they have money: see P. B. Keeler's report on exchange) of a certain value—say 100 units, for convenience. He and the female began to make conscious computations about the use of this 'extra' money; but before the computations were complete or the money spent, their family vehicle (with whose internal mechanism they, as individuals, are quite unfamiliar) (manufacture and repair is the responsibility-work of specialists) developed a dis-

function of a minor sort, something to do with the brakes, the repair of which cost 110 units (by comparison with the dividend).

My host and hostess (adult female) both seemed amused in describing the incident to me. "*Of course*," they said, "it's just a little more than our wind-fall." (word meaning unexpected benefit) "That's the way it *always* is." The stress-symbols are mine. They did *not* stress these words. . . .

. . . . Upon being questioned, they showed no particular awareness of the actual braking mechanism nor conscious knowledge of the materials of which it is composed, nor of the scale of prices of replacements.

. . . . Do you see it? Appalling! Not only are they able to compute a fairly precise 10% difference in unit prices on data of which they are not aware but to *cause*, without physical manipulation, a disfunction in a mechanism which they have not examined and do not awarely understand, for a purpose (there must be a purpose: of course such accuracy *cannot* be random) of which they are not aware, either; though it appears to be related to some sort of internal ritual competition with *themselves*.

. . . . There are two aspects of this 'always' occurrence which are, of course, totally beyond our power to counter: 1) the ability to manipulate physical mechanisms without specific contact with them; and 2) the fantastic computational ability which results in the manipulation to an exact amount required to result in a cost of an exact amount, of whose breakdown of detail they insist they are entirely ignorant. . . .

(Cont. on page 130)

TRULLION ALASTOR: 2262

JACK VANCE

(Second of two parts)

Illustrated by MIKE HINGE

All Glinnes wanted was to earn the money necessary to regain his family's property, Ambal Isle. All the Starmenters wanted was ransom for the five hundred richest men on Trullion. All the Connatic wanted was justice. . . but what was justice, and who was the Connatic. . . ?

SYNOPSIS

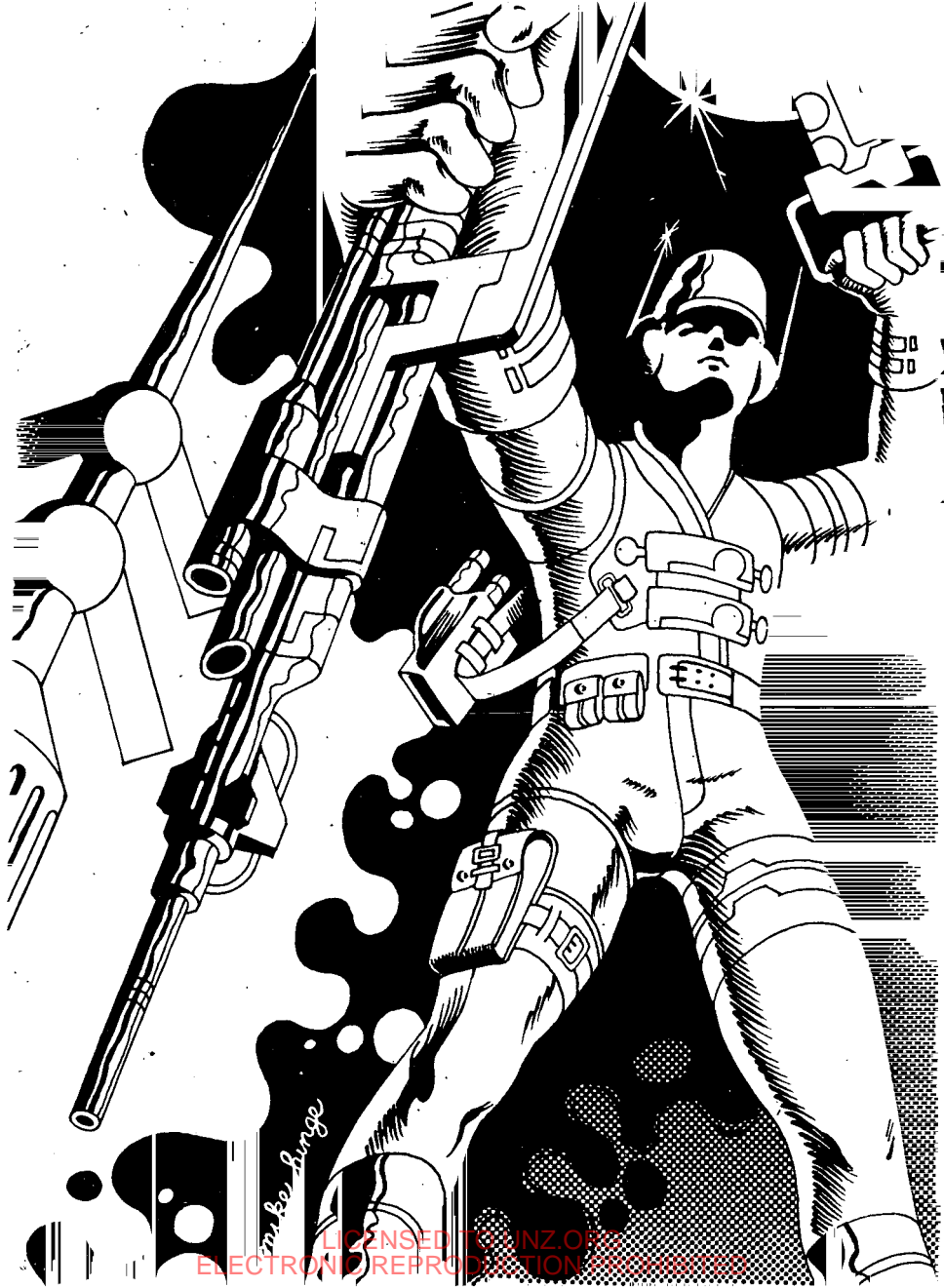
OUT TOWARD THE RIM of the galaxy hangs ALASTOR CUSTER, a whorl of thirty thousand live stars in a irregular volume twenty to thirty thousand light-years in diameter. The surrounding region is dark and unoccupied except for a few hermit stars; Alastor presents a flamboyant display of starstreams, luminous webs, sparkling nodes. Dust clouds hang across the brightness; the engulfed stars glow russet, rose, or smoky amber. Dead stars keep their own orbits: black hulks, paved with clinker; chunks of nuclear matter which have gathered to themselves crusts of carbide slag, iron dust, frozen gas, oddments of rock: the so-called starments, upon which those pirates and marauders who call themselves STARMENTERS are wont to take refuge.

Scattered about the cluster are three thousand inhabited planets with a human population of approximately five trillion persons. The worlds are diverse, the populations equally so; nevertheless they share a common language and all submit to the au-

thority of the CONNATIC at Lusz, on the world Numenes.

The current Connatic is OMAN URSHT, sixteenth in the Idite succession: a pensive man who often ponders the quirk of fate which brought him to his awesome position. He is quite aware that, from the objective purview, such marveling introspection is sheer ingenuousness: no matter who occupied the position, that person must necessarily wonder at his own astonishing singularity. Still, being human, the Connatic must reckon with his subjectivity and he is able to enjoy irrationality for its own sake without guilt.

Oman Ursht, in private, is a person of no great distinction, being of average stature and ordinary appearance. His features are regular, his skin is fair, his hair is dark russet brown, inclined to curl into ringlets. On public occasions he wears a severe black uniform with a black casque, and thereby seems to become inflexible and exacting: the impression he wishes to convey. Essentially Oman Ursht is a calm and reasonable man,



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administrate. He ponders all aspects of his public conduct, knowing well that his slightest act—a gesture, a word, a symbolic nuance—might start off an avalanche of unpredictable consequences: hence his effort to create the public image of a man rigid, terse and unemotional.

To the casual observer, Alastor Cluster is a system placid and peaceful. The Connatic knows differently. He recognizes that wherever human beings strive for advantage, disequilibrium exists; lacking easement the social fabric becomes taut and sometimes rips asunder. The Connatic conceives his function to be the identification and relief of social stresses. Sometimes he ameliorates, sometimes he employs techniques of distraction. When harshness becomes unavoidable he deploys his military agency, the WHELM. Oman Ursht winces to see an insect injured; the Connatic without compunction orders a million persons to their doom. In many cases, believing that each condition generates its own counter-condition, he stands aloof, fearing to introduce a confusing third factor. *When in doubt, do nothing*: this is one of the Connatic's favorite credos.

After an ancient tradition he roams anonymously about the cluster. Occasionally, in order to remedy an injustice, he represents himself as an important official; often he rewards kindness and self-sacrifice. He is fascinated by the ordinary life of his subjects and listens attentively to their conversations.

LUSZ, the Connatic's palace, is indeed a remarkable structure, rising ten thousand feet above the sea on five great pylons. Visitors roam the lower promenades; from every world of Alastor Cluster they come, and from places beyond: the Darkling Regions, the Primarchic, the Erdic Sector, the Rubrimar Cluster, and all the other parts of the galaxy which men have made their own.

Above the public promenades are governmental offices, ceremonial halls, a communications complex; and, somewhat higher, the famous Ring of the Worlds with an informational chamber for each in-

pinacles contain the Connatic's personal quarters. They penetrate the clouds and sometimes pierce through to the upper sky. When sunlight glistens on its iridescent surfaces, LUSZ, the palace of the Connatic, is a wonderful sight and is often reckoned the most inspiring artifact of the human race.

Chamber 2262 along the Ring of the Worlds pertained to TRULLION, the lone planet out of a small white star, one spark in a spray curling out toward the cluster's edge. The geographical globe in Chamber 2262 indicated Trullion to be a small world, for the most part clouds and water. A single narrow continent, MERLAND, clasped an arc of the equator, dwindling and drowning to become a chain of islands, which themselves submerged to leave half a world of empty ocean rolling between the ice-caps.

Trade-winds slanted in upon Merland to sweep rain-clouds against the flanks of the central mountains range; hundreds of rivers returned down pleasant valleys, where fruit and cereals grew so plentifully as to command no value. Fat herds grazed the meadows; the rivers supplied water-salads, mud-worms, rudge, lotus bulbs, lotus fruit, crustaceans; the oceans and shores offered their own abundance to whomever chose to gather it in.

The original settlers brought with them those habits of thrift and competitive zeal which had promoted survival in a previously harsh environment; the first era of Trill history produced a dozen wars, a thousand fortunes, a caste of hereditary aristocrats, and a waning of the initial dynamism. The Trill commonly asked itself: why toil, why carry weapons when a life of feasts, singing, revelry and hedonistic ease was an equal option? In the space of three generations old Trullion became a memory. The Trill now worked as circumstances directed: to prepare for a feast, to indulge his taste for hussade, to earn a pulsor for his boat, a pot for his kitchen, a length of cloth for his *paray*; that easy skirt-like garment worn by man and woman alike. The average Trill occasionally tilled his lush acres, fished the ocean, netted the river, harvested wild fruit, and when the mood was on him dug

emeralds and opals from the mountain slopes, or gathered *cauch*.^{*} He worked perhaps an hour each day, or occasionally as much as two or three; he spent considerably more time musing on the verandah of his ramshackle house. He distrusted most technical devices, finding them unsympathetic, confusing and—more importantly—expensive, though he gingerly used a telephone the better to order his social activities, and took the pulsor of his boat for granted.

As in mostbucolic societies, the Trill knew his precise place in the hierarchy of classes. At the summit, almost a race apart, was the aristocracy; at the bottom were the nomad Trevanyi, a group equally distinct. The Trill, generally tolerant, disdained unfamiliar or exotic ideas. Ordinarily clam and gentle, he nonetheless, under sufficient provocation, demonstrated ferocious rages, and certain of his customs—particularly the macabre ritual at the *prutanshyr*—were almost barbaric. The government of Trullion was rudimentary and a matter in which the average Trill took little interest. Merland was divided into twenty prefectures, each administered by a few bureaus and a small group of officials, who constituted a caste superior to the ordinary Trill, but considerably inferior to the aristocrats. Trade with the rest of the cluster was unimportant; on all Trill only four space-ports existed: Port Gaw in the west of Merland. Port Kerubian on the north coast, Port Maheul on the south coast and Vayamenda in the east.

A hundred miles east of Port Maheul was the market town WELGEN, famous for its fine hussade stadium; beyone Welgen lay the FENS, a district of remarkable beauty. Thou-

sands of waterways divided the area into a myriad islands, some tracts of good dimension, some so small as to support only a fisherman's cabin and a tree for the mooring of his boat.

In the dead center of the Fens, three miles from the village SAURKASH, was RABENDARY ISLAND, where lived JUT HULDEN, his wife MARUCHA, and their three sons. Rabendary Island comprised about a hundred acres, including a thirty-acre forest of mena, blackwood, candlenut, semprissima. To the south spread the wide expanse of Ambal Broad. Farwan Water bounded Rabendary on the east, Gilweg Water on the west, and along the north shore flowed the placid Saur River. At the western tip of the island the ramshackle old home of the Huldens stood between a pair of huge mimosa trees. Rosalia vine grew up the posts of the verandah, and overhung the edge of the roof, producing a fragrant shade for the pleasure of those taking their ease in the old string chairs. To the south was a view of Ambal Broad and AMBAL ISLE, a property of three acres, supporting a number of beautiful pomanders, russet-silver against a background of solemn menas, and three enormous fanzanceels, holding heir great shaggy pompoms high in the air. Through the foliage gleamed the white facade of the manse where Lord Ambal long ago maintained his mistresses. The property had come into the possession of Jut Huldens, but he had no inclination to dwell in the manor; their friends would think them absurd.

In his youth Jut Huldens had played hussade for the Saurkash Serpents. His wife Marucha had been *sheirl*^{*} for the Welgen Warlocks; so they had met, and married, and brought into being three sons: SHIRA, and twins GLINNES and GLAY; and a

^{*}Cauch: an aphrodisiac drug derived from the spore of a mountain mold, and used by Trills to a greater or lesser extent. Some retreated so far into erotic fantasy as to become irresponsible, and the subject of mild ridicule. Irresponsibility, in the context of the Trill environment, could hardly be accounted a critical social problem.

^{*}Sheirl: an untranslatable term from the special vocabulary of hussade: a glorious nymph, radiant with ecstatic vitality, who impels the players of her team to impossible feats of strength and agility. The sheirl is a virgin who must be protected from the shame of defeat.

daughter, Sharue, who had been stolen by the merlings.**

THIS STORY is Glinnes': It relates what happens to him when he returns from a career of ten years in the Whelm to find that his father, Jut, has been trapped and caught by the merlings whom he had gone out to hunt once too often. Officially this meant that his older brother, Shira, should now be Squire of Rabendary. But Shira too is missing—feared to be dead, but possibly only “off visiting friends,” or caught-crazy in the wilds somewhere—and his twin brother Glay (one hour younger than he) has assumed legal responsibility for Rabendary.

The house is a neglected mess and Ambal Isle has been sold—quite improperly, since the legal right to sell it rests with Shira or, if he is dead, with Glinnes. And Glinnes does not wish to see the property with its fine manse lost.

In the confrontation with his mother and his brother, Glinnes finds Glay distant and unsettling and his mother actively hostile to his return. Neither seem at all concerned about the state of neglect into which the place has fallen.

The island has been sold, it develops, because Glay has joined a new political-social movement known as FANSCHERADE, under the spell, it would seem, of a man named JUNIUS FARFAN, to whom he has given all the proceeds of the sale. Glinnes points out that under Trullion law, a sale is not final until a year has passed, and that the money must be returned to the purchaser and the island taken back, since Glay had no right to sell it. But Glay refuses to get the money back, and Farfan also refuses to return it. This leaves

Glinnes in a quandary, since the year will be up all too soon. He pays a call on LUTE CASAGAVE, the buyer of Ambal Isle, and finds the man high-handed and pre-emptory. Casagave now calls himself Lord Ambal and claims hereditary right to the Isle.

Glinnes' troubles do not end here. His brother has lived for a time among the Trevanyi and a group of them are camped in the orchard, where they are fast laying waste to the trees and the meadow. They are the DROSSETS—VANG DROSSET, his wife TINGO, his sons ASHMOR and HARVING and his daughter DUISANE. When, on the day of Glinnes' return, they fell one of the oldest and finest barchnut trees for firewood, Glinnes orders them off the land. They go unwillingly, and set upon him on a later night, robbing him and beating him and leaving him for the merlings, whose clutches he narrowly escapes.

Desperate for money with which to buy back Ambal Isle—he needs twelve thousand ozols—he tries to obtain a loan, but finds that until Shira's fate is certified he is not the legal owner of Rabendary and thus cannot pledge it as security. He turns then to THAMMAS, LORD GENSIFER, who is/ organizing a tournament-level hussade club.

Hussade is a sport which is played on narrow catwalks over tanks of water. At each end stands the sheirl (a virginal woman of inspirational beauty) of the challenging teams; each team defends the honor of its sheirl by fending off the attempts of the opposing team to reach her, while simultaneously driving to reach the other sheirl. Each sheirl is clad only in a single white garment, held closed by a gold ring. Once a hussade player grasps the gold ring of the opposing team's sheirl, all play stops. At this point a bargain is struck between the teams: the sheirl's honor is ransomed. But when the game stakes have been exhausted and no ransom money remains, the ring is pulled, the sheirl is denuded, and she may no longer stand for a hussade team.

There is money to be made in hussade. A new team must put up money for its initial treasury, but every win means a larger treasury and the chance to play better teams for higher stakes. The ultimate rewards for a

**merlings: amphibious half-intelligent indigenes of Trullion, living in tunnels burrowed into the riverbanks. Merlings and men lived on the edge of a most delicate truce; each hated and hunted the other, but under mutually tolerable conditions. The merlings prowled the land at night for carrion, small animals and children. If they molested boats or entered a habitation, men retaliated by dropping explosives into the water. Should a man fall into the water or attempt to swim, he had intruded into the domain of the merlings and risked being dragged under. Similarly, a merling discovered on land was shown no mercy.

good team can be great.

Lord Gensifer has advertised for superior team members and Glinnes, who played good hussade in his youth, goes to see him, hoping to obtain the loan of the necessary twelve-thousands ozols. He finds, however, that Gensifer himself is strapped for money and is organizing the team in order to support himself. His plans are grandiose, but potentially workable. He is assembling a good team. Reluctantly, because Gensifer plans to captain his team himself, Glinnes agree to join.

Glinnes' mother marries AKADIE the Mentor, who lives in a remarkable house on Sarpassante Island, five miles north of Rabendary. Akadie is a thin long-armed man with an ill-assorted set of features: a big nose, sparse curls of snuff-brown hair, glassy blue eyes, and a mouth continually trembling at the verge of a smile. Akadie's profession includes the offices of epigrammatist, poet, calligrapher, sage, arbiter of elegance, professional guest (hiring Akadie to grace a party is an act of conspicuous consumption), marriage-broker, legal consultant, repository of local tradition and source of scandalous gossip. Akadie's droll face, gentle voice and subtle language renders his gossip all the more mordant. Jut never had any use for Akadie, and the news—which comes the morning after the Drossets robbed Glinnes and left him for the merlings—leaves Glinnes in a bemused state. How his father would have roared with wrath!

Glinnes tracks down the Drossets' new camp, and tricks Vang and his wife, tying them and searching them without finding his stolen money. Then he attacks their camp. Finally he thinks to dig under their campfire, and there he finds a jar filled with money. He takes the money and replaces it with feces and reburies the jar, putting the fire back where it had been. When he counts the money, he receives a shock: in addition to his own there is a smaller bundle, wound around a golden fob: the fob which had belonged to and was initialed by his father first and then his brother Shira. There are two possibilities: the Drossets had either robbed Shira alive; or they had robbed him

dead. The latter seems the more likely.

In the meantime, Gensifer has put together his team, the Fleharish GORGONS. It's a good team, but Lord Gensifer is not an ideal captain. His plays are over-complicated and too intricate: the team scores only when Gensifer has been tanked and is out of action and Glinnes takes over to call the plays. The Gorgons win a game and lose one; with the loss of the second, Glinnes and several of his teammates quit in disgust to join an "open" team—one which anyone can join on the basis of ability—the Saurkash TANCHINAROS.

CHAPTER 12

WHEN GLINNESS ARRIVED home late the following morning he found a strange boat tied to his dock. No one sat on the verandah and the house was empty. Glinnes went outside to look around and saw three men sauntering across the meadow: Glay, Akadie and Junius Farfan. All three wore neat garments of black and gray, the uniform of Fanscherade. Glay and Farfan spoke earnestly together, Akadie walked somewhat apart.

Glinnes went forward to meet them. Akadie put on a half-sheepish smile at the face of Glinnes' scornful amazement. "I never thought you'd involve yourself in this rubbish," snorted Glinnes.

"One must move with the times," said Akadie. "Indeed, I find the garments a source of amusement." Glay turned him a cool glance; Junius Farfan merely laughed.

Glinnes waved his hand to the verandah. "Seat yourselves! Will you drink wine?"

Farfan and Akadie took a goblet of wine; Glay gave a curt refusal. He followed Glinnes into the house, where

he had spent his childhood, and stood looking about the room with the eyes of a stranger. He turned and preceded Glinnes from the house.

"I have a proposition for you," said Glay. "You want Ambal Isle." He looked toward Junius Farfan, who laid an envelope on the table. "You shall have Ambal Island. There is the money to dislodge Casagave."

Glinnes reached for the envelope; Glay pushed it away. "Not so fast. When Ambal is again your property you can go to live there if you choose. And I get the use of Rabendary."

Glinnes looked at him in astonishment. "Now you want Rabendary! Why can't be both live here as brothers, and work the land together?"

Glay shook his head. "Unless you changed your attitudes, there would only be dissension. I don't have energy to waste. You take Ambal; I'll take Rabendary."

"This is the most marvelous proposition I have ever heard," said Glinnes, "when both belong to me."

Glay shook his head. "Not if Shira is alive."

"Shira is dead." Glinnes went out to his hiding place, uncovered the pot, removed the golden fob which he brought back to the verandah and tossed it on the table. "Remember this? I took it from your friends the Drossets. They killed and robbed Shira and threw him to the merlings."

Glay glanced at the fob. "Did they admit it?"

"No."

"Can you prove you took it from the Drossets?"

"You have heard me tell you."

"That's not enough," said Glay curtly.

Glinnes slowly turned his head and stared into Glay's face. Slowly he rose to his feet. Glay sat rigid as a steel post. Akadie said hurriedly, "Of course your word is sufficient, Glinnes. Sit down."

"Glay can withdraw his remark and then withdraw himself."

Akadie said, "Glay meant only that your word is legally insufficient. Am I right, Glay?"

"Yes, yes," said Glay in a bored voice. "Your word is sufficient, so far as I am concerned. The proposal remains the same."

"Why the sudden yearning to return home to Rabendary?" asked Glinnes. "Are you giving up your fancy dress party?"

"To the contrary. On Rabendary we will found a Fanscherade community, a college of dynamic formulations."

"By the stars," marveled Glinnes. "Formulations. To what purpose?"

Junius Farfan said in a soft voice: "We intend to found an academy of achievement."

Glinnes looked out over Ambal Broad in bemusement. "I admit to perplexity. Alastor Cluster is thousands of years old; men by the trillions fill the galaxy. Great mentors here, there, everywhere, across the whole pageant of existence have propounded problems and solved them. Everything conceivable has been achieved and all goals attained: not once but thousands of times over. It is well known that we live in the golden afternoon of the human race; hence, in the name of the Thirty Thousands Stars, where will you find a

fresh area of knowledge which must urgently be advanced from Rabendary meadow?"

Gl原因 made an impatient motion, as if at Glinnes' embarrassing stupidity; Junius Farfan, however, responded politely. "These concepts are naturally familiar to us. It can easily be demonstrated, however, that the scope of knowledge, and hence achievement, is unlimited. A boundary between the known and the unknown always exists. In such a situation opportunity is also unlimited for any number of folk whatever. We do not pretend or even hope to extend knowledge across new borders. Our academy is only precursor: before we explore new fields we must delineate the old, and define the areas where achievement is possible. This is a tremendous work in itself: I expect to work my life out only as a precursor. Even so, I will have given this life meaning. I invite you, Glinnes Hulden, to join Fanscherade, and share our great aim."

"And wear a grey uniform and give up hussade and star-watching? By no means. I don't care whether I achieve anything or not. As for your college, if you laid it down on the meadow you'd spoil my view. Look at the light on the water yonder; look at the color in the trees! Suddenly it seems as if your talk of 'achievement' and 'meaning' is sheer vanity: the pompous talk of small boys."

Junius Farfan laughed. "I'll agree to 'vanity', along with arrogance, egocentricity, elitism, whatever you wish. No one has claimed otherwise, any more than Jan Dublays claimed mortification of the flesh when he wrote *The*

Rose in the Gargoyle's Teeth."

"In other words," said Akadie gently, "Fanscherade deftly turns the force inherent in human vice to presumably useful ends."

"Abstract discussions are entertaining," remarked Junius Farfan, "but we must keep ourselves focused upon dynamic, rather than static, processes. Do you agree to Gl原因's proposal?"

"That Rabendary be turned into a Fanscherade madhouse? Of course not! Have you people no soul? Look out over this landscape! There's ample human achievement in the universe, but no nearly enough beauty. Establish your academy somewhere out on the compline, on the lava beds, or back of the Broken Hills. Not here."

Junius Farfan rose to his feet. "We'll bid you good-day." He picked up the envelope. Glinnes reached forward; Gl原因's hand clamped his wrist. Farfan placidly tucked the envelope in his pocket.

Gl原因 drew back with a wolfish grin. Glinnes leaned forward, muscles tense. Junius Farfan watched him soberly. Glinnes relaxed. Farfan's gaze was steady and sure, and disconcerting.

Akadie said, "I'll stay here with Glinnes; he'll ferry me home after a bit."

"As you will," said Farfan. He and Gl原因 went to their boat and, after a last appraisal of Rabendary Meadow, the two departed.

"There's something downright insolent about that proposal," said Glinnes through gritted teeth. "Do they take me for a dunderhead, to be fleeced so easily?"

"They are absolutely sure in their

purpose," said Akadie. "Perhaps you mistake assurance for insolence . . . Agreed, the qualities sometimes converge. Still, neither Glay nor Junius Farfan are insolent men. Farfan indeed is extraordinarily bland. Glay would appear somewhat remote, but still, all in all, a true-hearted fellow."

Glinnes could hardly control his indignation. "When they cheat me from eight directions and steal my property? Your concepts need re-examination."

Akadie signified that the matter lacked consequence. "I looked in at the hussade game yesterday. I must say that I was greatly diverted, though the play was not altogether precise. Hussade is intensely an interaction between personalities; no one game is ever like another. I might even believe that the masks are unconsciously recognized as a necessity, to prevent personalities from dominating the game."

"In hussade anything might be true. I know that I can't abide Lord Gensifer's personality, to such effect that I'll be playing with the Tanchinaros."

Akadie nodded sagely. "I chanced to meet Lord Gensifer this morning in Voulash of all places, at the Placid Valley Inn. Over a cup of tea he mentioned that he had released several players for insubordination."

"Insubordination?" Glinnes snorted. "More accurately, for outright disgust. What did he want in Voulash? Mind you, the question is casual. I don't care to pay a fee."

Akadie spoke with dignity. "Lord Gensifer was discussing hussade with some of the Voulash Gannets. I believe that he induced several of them to join

the Gorgons."

"Well indeed! So Lord Gensifer refuses to quit?"

"To the contrary. He seethes with dedication. He claims that he has been beaten only by flukes and sluggishness, and never by the opposition."

Glinnes laughed scornfully.

"Whenever Lord Gensifer sat in the foul tank we were able to score. When he called plays, we were chased all over the field."

"Will you fare better with old Neronavy? He's not noted for imaginative play."

"Quite true. I think we could do better." Glinnes ruminated a moment. "Would you care to ride over to Voulash again?"

"I have nothing better to do," said Akadie.

DENZEL WARHOUND lived in a cabin between two vast myrsile trees, at the head of Placid Valley. He had not yet been apprised of Lord Gensifer's visit to Voulash, but he displayed neither surprise nor rancor. "The Gannets were a part-time proposition; I'm surprised the team held together as well as it did. Just a moment." He went to the telephone and spoke several minutes with someone whose face Glinnes could not see. Warhound returned to the porch. "Both strikes, both wings and a rover: all Gorgons now. The Gannets have flown for the last time this year, I assure you."

"As a matter of possible interest," said Glinnes, "the Tanchinaros could make good use of an aggressive captain. Neronavy is not as alert as he might be. With a clever captain the

Tanchinaros might well win considerable money."

Denzel Warhound pulled at his chin. "The Tanchinaros are an open club, I believe?"

"As open as the air."

"The idea has appeal, quite decidedly."

CHAPTER 13

THE TRANSITION of the Tanchinaros from 'ten guards and a fat old man' to a balanced and versatile team was not achieved without disgruntlement. The irascible Nilo Neronavy refused to concede the superior skills of Denzel Warhound. When the reverse was demonstrated he stormed from the field, accompanied by the displaced forwards and the sheirl, his niece. An hour later, in the arbor of the Magic Tench, Neronavy and his group declared themselves the nucleus of a new team, to be known as the Saurkash Fishkillers, and went so far as to challenge Lord Gensifer, who chanced to be passing by, to a match with his Gorgons. Lord Gensifer agreed to consider the offer.

The Tanchinaros, suddenly awake to their potentialities, drilled with care, developing precision, coordination and a repertory of basic plays. Their first opponents would be the Raparees from Galgade in the East Fens. The Raparees would play for no more than fifteen hundred ozols, which in any event was the capability of the Tanchinaro treasury. And who for sheirl? Paul Perinda, the club manager, introduced several lackluster candidates, whom the team found unsuitable.

"We're a Class A team," declared

Denzel Warhound, "maybe better; so get us a Class A sheirl. We won't settle for any slab of merling bait."

"I have a girl in mind," said Perinda. "She is absolutely first class—*sashei*, beauty, enthusiasm—except for one or two small points."

"Ah indeed? She is the mother of nine children?"

"No. I'm sure she's virgin; after all, she's Trevanyi, which is one of the small flaws I mentioned."

"Aha," said Glinnes. "And her other flaws?"

"Well—she seems rather emotional. Her tongue has a life of its own. All in all, she is a very spirited person: an ideal sheirl."

"Aha! And her name: conceivably Duissane Drosset?"

"Quite correct. Do you have objections?"

Glinnes pursed his lips, trying to define his precise attitude toward Duissane Drosset. No question as to her verve and *sashei*; she would certainly provide impetus for the team. He said: "I have no objection."

IF DUSSANE was abashed to find Glinnes on the team, she gave no signal of the fact. She came alone to the practice field: independent conduct indeed for a Trevanyi girl. She wore a dark brown cloak which the south wind pressed against her slight figure, and seemed very appealing, almost innocent. She had little to say but watched the Tanchinaros at their exercises with apparently intelligent attention, and the team performed with a considerable increment of energy.

Duissane accompanied the team to

the arbor of the Magic Trench where they usually took after-practice refreshment. Perinda seemed distraught, and when he introduced Duissane formally he somewhat pointedly described her as 'one of our candidates'."

Savat cried out: "So far as I'm concerned, she's our sheirl; let's have no more of this 'candidate' talk."

Perinda cleared his throat. "Yes, yes, of course. But one or two matters have come up, and, we traditionally choose our sheirls after full discussion."

"What remains to be discussed?" demanded the guard Etzing. He asked Duissane: "Are you prepared to serve us loyally as our sheirl, and take the bad with the good and the good with the bad?"

Duissane's luminous gaze, wandering the group, seemed to rest on instant upon Glinnes. But she said: "Yes, certainly, though you players risk only your money. I risk my *isthoune*."

"Well then!" cried Etzing. "Shall we acclaim her?"

"A moment, just a moment!" said Perinda, slightly flushed. "As I say, one or two small points remain to be discussed."

"Such as what?" bawled Etzing. "Let's hear them!"

Perinda puffed out his cheeks, pink with embarrassment. "We can discuss the matter another time."

Duissane asked: "What are these small points? Discuss them now, for all of me. Perhaps I can explain whatever needs explaining. Go on," she commanded as Perinda still hesitated. "If allegations have been made I want to hear them." And again it seemed as if her gaze rested a long instant upon

Glinnes.

"'Allegations' is too strong a word," stammered Périnda. "Just hints and rumors, in regard to—well, your virginity. The condition seems to be doubtful, even though you are Trevanyi."

Duissane's eyes flashed. "How could anyone dare say such a thing about me? It is all so unjust and cowardly! Luckily I know my enemy and I will never forget his antagonism!"

"No, no!" cried Perinda. "I won't say from where the rumor came to me; it's only that—"

"You wait here!" Duissane told them. "Do not depart until I return. If I must be distrusted and humiliated, allow me at least a contravention." She swept furiously from the arbor, almost colliding with Lord Gensifer and one of his cronies, Lord Alandrix, on their way into the bower.

"Stars!" exclaimed Lord Gensifer, "and who might she be and at whom is she so enraged?"

Perinda spoke in a subdued voice: "My lord, she is a candidate for Tanchinaro sheirl."

Lord Gensifer laughed in great satisfaction. "She's made the wisest move of her life, fleeing the engagement. Truth to tell, she's a delicious little thing; I wouldn't mind pulling her ring myself."

"Almost certainly the opportunity will never arise," said Glinnes.

"Don't be too sure! The Gorgons are a different team now that changes have been made."

"I imagine that you can get a game with us, if the booty is adequate."

"Indeed. How much do you consider adequate?"

"Three thousand, five thousand, ten thousand—as much as you like."

"Bah. The Tanchinaros can't raise two thousand ozols, let alone ten thousand."

"Whatever booty the Gorgons put up, we'll match it."

Lord Gensifer nodded judiciously. "Something just might come of this. Ten thousands ozols, you say."

"Why not?" Glinnes looked around the arbor. All the Tanchinaros present knew as well as he did that the treasury contained three thousand ozols at the most, but only Perinda betrayed uneasiness.

"Very good," said Lord Gensifer briskly. "The Gorgons accept the challenge, and in due course we'll make the necessary arrangements." He turned to go, just as Duissane Drosset marched back into the arbor. Her golden-red curls were somewhat disarranged; her eyes glowed with equal parts of triumph and rage. She glared toward Glinnes and thrust a document at Perinda. "There! I must suffer inconvenience merely to quiet the spiteful tongues of vipers. Read! Are you satisfied?"

Perinda scrutinized the document. "This appears to be a document asserting the purity of Duissane Drosset, and the attestor is none other than Doctor Niameth. Well then, the unfortunate matter is settled."

"Not so fast," called Glinnes. "What is the date on the document?"

"What a degraded creature you are!" stormed Duissane. "The document is dated today!"

Perinda concurred, and added dryly: "Doctor Niameth did not note the

precise hour and minute of his examination, but I suppose this is carrying exactitude too far."

Lord Gensifer said, "My dear young lady, don't you think you might fare better with the Gorgons? We are a courteous group, the exact opposite of these rude Tanchinaros."

"Courtesy wins no hussade games," said Perinda. "If you want to be snatched naked at your first game, go with the Gorgons."

Duissane flicked Lord Gensifer with an appraising glance. Half-regretfully she shook her head. "I've only permission for the Tanchinaros. You'd have to supplicate my father."

Lord Gensifer raised his eyes to the ceiling, as if imploring one or another of the deities to witness the graceless demands put upon him. He bowed low. "My best regards." With another salute to the Tanchinaros he left the arbor.

Perinda looked to Glinnes. "Your badinage is all very well, but where will we find ten thousand ozols?"

"Where will Lord Gensifer find ten thousand ozols? He tried to borrow money from me. Who knows what a month or two will bring? Ten thousands ozols may seem a trivial sum."

"Who knows, who knows?" muttered Perinda. "Well then, back to Duissane Drosset? Is she our sheirl or is she not?"

No one protested; perhaps with Duissane looking from face to face no one dared; and so it was arranged.

THE GAME with the Galgade Raparees went with almost embarrassing ease. The Tanchinaros were surprised to find their game so effective; either they were

six times more powerful than they had assumed, or the Raparees were the weakest team of Jolany Prefecture. Three times the Tanchinaros thrust the length of the field, the formations supple and decisive, the Raparees always seeming to find two Tanchinaros upon them, their sheirl in constant travail, while Duissane stood composed and cold, even somewhat stern, the white robe enhancing her frail charm. The Raparees, dejected and outclassed, paid three ransoms and resigned the field with their sheirl not denuded, to the displeasure of the crowd.

After the game the Tanchinaros assembled at the Magic Tench. Duissane held somewhat aloof from the conviviality, and Glinnes, chancing to look to the side, struck full into the lowering gaze of Vang Drosset. Almost immediately her father conducted Duissane from the premises.

A week later the Tanchinaros fared up the Scurge River to Erch on Little Vole Island to play the Erch Elements, with almost the same results. Lucho had been shifted to left strike, the better to work in tandem with Glinnes Hulden, and Savat played right wing with adequate accuracy; still there were relatively weak areas in the deployment which a skillful team would exploit. The left wing Gajowan was light and somewhat diffident and Rolo the left rover was rather too slow. During the game with the Elements Glinnes noticed Lord Gensifer in one of the middle boxes. He also noted Lord Gensifer's eyes turned often toward Duissane, though in this regard he was not alone, for Duissane projected an irresistible fascination. In the white gown

her Trevanyi background was forgotten; she seemed an entrancing confection, wistful, tart, gay, tragic, reckless, cautious, wise foolish. Glinnes thought to see other attributes as well; he could never look at her without hearing a tinkle of laughter through the starlit darkness.

The next game, with the Hansard Dragons, pointed up the soft spot in the Tanchinaro's left wall, when the Dragons twice drove deep along the Tanchinaro left flank. In each case they were halted by the guards, then defeated by a thrust against the sheirl from the right, and the Tanchinaros won the game in three successive skirmishes. Again Lord Gensifer sat in one of the middle boxes with several men strange to Glinnes, and after the game he appeared at the Magic Tench where he renewed his challenge to the Tanchinaros. Each side would offer a treasury of ten thousand ozols, so Lord Gensifer stipulated, and the match must take place four weeks from the present date.

Somewhat dubiously Perinda accepted the challenge. As soon as Lord Gensifer departed, the Tanchinaros began to speculate as to what devious scheme Lord Gensifer had in mind. As Gilweg put it: "Not even Tammi could hope to win with his present team."

"He thinks he'll storm our left side," said Etzing dourly. "They almost got away with it today."

"He wouldn't speculate ten thousand ozols on that theory," said Glinnes. I smell a whole set of startling antics, such as an entire new team—the Vertrice Karpouns, the Port Angel Scorpions—wearing Gorgon uniforms for the day."

"That must be what he's got in mind," Lucho agreed. "Tammi would think it a fine joke to beat us with such a team."

"The ten thousand ozols wouldn't hurt his feelings either."

"Such a team would rip open our left side as if it were a melon," predicted Etzing, and he glanced across the arbor to where Gajowan and Rolo listened with glum expressions. For these two the conversation could have only a single implication; by the inexorable logic of competition, two thousand ozol players had no place on a ten-thousand-ozol team.

Two days later a pair of new men joined the Tanchinaros. The first, Yalden Wirp, had been represented upon Lord Gensifer's original dream-team; the second, Dion Sladine, while playing with an obscure team from the Far Hills, had attracted Denzel Warhound's respectful attention. The vulnerable left flank of the Tanchinaros had been not only strengthened but converted into a source of dynamic potential.

ROLO AND GAJOWAN were persuaded to remain with the club in the capacity of substitutes and utility players and in a game with the Wigtown Devisers, two weeks before the challenge match with the Gorgons, they played their old positions. The Devisers, a team of good reputation, lost a hard-fought ransom before they discovered the soft left side. They began to hurl probes and thrusts at the vulnerable area, and several times gained the back court, only to fail before the mobile and massive Tanchinaro guards. For almost ten minutes

the Tanchinaros defended their territory, apparently lacking offensive force, while Lord Gensifer watched from his box, occasionally leaning to mutter a comment to his friends.

The Tanchinaros finally won, if sluggishly, by the usual three successive takes; Duissane as yet had never known a hand on her ring.

The Tanchinaro treasure was now well in excess of ten thousand ozols. The players speculated upon the possibilities of wealth. Several options were open. They could regard themselves as a two-thousand-ozol team and try to play teams of such quality. They would find scheduling difficult, if not impossible. They might rate themselves a five-thousand-ozol team and play in this category, risking not too much, gaining moderately. Or they might rank themselves a team of the first quality, and play ten-thousand-ozol teams—to gain both wealth and the peculiar ineffable quality known as *isthoune*. If the *isthoune* became sufficiently intense, they might declare themselves a team of championship quality and engage to prove themselves against any team of Trullion or elsewhere, for any treasure within their capabilities.

THE DAY of the challenge match began with a thunderstorm. Lavender lightning spurted from cloud to cloud and occasionally struck down at the hills, shivering one or another of the tall menas with incandescent electric ague. At noon the storm drifted over the hills and hung there muttering and grumbling.

The Tanchinaros were first on the

field and were announced to a pulsing crowd of sixteen thousand folk: "The dynamic and inexorable Tanchinaros of the Saurkash Hussade Club, in their usual uniforms of silver, blue and black, who vow to defend forever the *isthoune* of their precious and exalted sheirl Duissane! The personnel includes the captain: Denzel Warhound; the strikes: Tyron Lucho and Glinnes Huldren; the wings: Yalden Wirp and Ervil Savat; the guards . . ." So down the roster. "And now appearing on the field in their striking uniforms of maroon and black, the new and utterly determined Gorgons, under the wise captaincy of Thammas Lord Gensifer, who champions the indescribable charm of their sheirl Arelmra. Strikes . . ."

Precisely as Glinnes had expected Lord Gensifer brought on the field a team totally different from that which the Tanchinaros had previously defeated. These present Gorgons carried themselves with competence and purpose: they were clearly no strangers to victory. Only one man did Glinnes recognize as a local: the captain, Lord Gensifer. His scheme was of course immediately transparent, and would seem to have for its purpose the winning of a quick ten thousand ozols. Hussade sportsmanship was loose and chancy; the game depended much upon feints, tricks, intimidation, any sort of deception, hence Lord Gensifer's stratagem did him neither credit nor shame, though it made for a game in which certain niceties might be overlooked.

From the orchestra came music: the traditional *Marvels of Grace and Glory*, as the sheirls were escorted to

their pedestals. The Gorgon sheirl Arelmra, a stately dark-haired girl, evinced no great surge of that warm propulsive immediacy known as *emblance*. Lord Gensifer, so Glinnes noted, seemed placid and bland. His apomb dwindled a trifle when he noticed the changes at wing and rover, then he shrugged and smiled to himself.

The teams took their places; the music of horns, drums and flutes sounded: the poignant *Sheirls Softly Hopeful for Glory*.

The captains met at the center bridge with the field judge. Denzel Warhound took occasion to comment: "Lord Gensifer, your team is rife with strange faces; are they all local folk?"

"We are all citizens of Alastor; we are local folk, all five trillion of us," said Lord Gensifer largely. "And your own team? All inhabit Saurkash?"

"Saurkash or the environs."

The field judge tossed up the rod; the Gorgons were awarded green and the game began. Lord Gensifer called his formation and the Gorgons moved forward: intent, keen, assured; the Tanchinaros instantly sensed a team of high quality.

The Gorgons feinted to the Tanchinaro right, then hurled a brutal assault at the left. Strong shapes in maroon and black, the masks leering in mindless glee, thrust against the silver and black. The Tanchinaro left side gave only enough to encapsulate a group of Gorgons and press them against the moat. The light went red; Warhound tried to close a trap around a pair of advanced Gorgons, but the Gorgon rovers came forward and opened an escape route. Patterns

shifted; formations thrust and pulled, testing first one individual, then another. After about ten minutes of indecisive play, Lord Gensifer incautiously strayed from his hange. Glinnes leapt the moat, engaged Lord Gensifer and toppled him into the tank.

Lord Gensifer emerged wet and furious, which had been Glinnes' intent; the Gorgons were now hindered by the fervor of his playcalling. The Tanchinaros made a sudden center lunge of classic simplicity; Ervil Savat leapt up on the pedestal and seized Arelmra's ring. Her patrician features drooped in annoyance; clearly she had expected no such invasion of her citadel.

Lord Gensifer stonily paid over five thousand ozols, and the field judge called a five minute rest period.

The Tanchinaros conferred. "Tammi seethes with blue fury," said Lucho. "This isn't at all what he had in mind."

"Let's tank him again," Warhound suggested.

"My idea precisely. This is a good team, but we can get at them through Tammi."

"But stealth!" Glinnes warned. "So that they don't guess what we're up to! Tank Tammi by all means, but as if it were a casual by-blow."

Play resumed. Lord Gensifer came forth ominous in his wrath and the Gorgons themselves seemed to share his fury. Play moved up and down the field, fluid and fast. During red light, Warhound thrust out his left wing, which abruptly veered to come at Lord Gensifer, who raced back for the protection of his hange, but vainly; he was intercepted and tanked. For an instant an avenue lay open for the Tanchinaro

forwards, and Warhound sent them pell-mell down the field. Lord Gensifer came mad-eyed up the ladder, only in time to pay a second ransom, and his ten thousand ozols were gone.

The Gorgons thoughtfully took counsel together. Warhound called over to the referee: "What does that other team call itself on ordinary occasions?"

"Didn't you know? They're the Stilettoes from Rufous Planet, on exhibition tour. You're playing a good team today. They've already beaten the Port Angel Scorpions and the Jonus Infidels—with their own captain, needless to say."

"Well then," said Lucho generously, "let's give them all a fine bath, to keep them humble; why victimize poor Tammi alone?"

"Bravo! We'll send them back to Rufous clean and tidy!"

Red light: the Tanchinaros vaulted the moat to find the Gorgons in a Stern Redoubt formation. With two scores to the good the Tanchinaro guards were able to play somewhat more loosely than usual. They advanced to the moat, then crossed; a procedure which showed an almost insulting disregard for the enemy's offensive capability. A sudden flurry of action, a melee; into the tank splashed Gorgons and Tanchinaros. On the ways maroon and black strove with silver, blue and black; metal fangs glinted into ghoulis black grins. Figures swayed, toppled; captains uttered hoarse calls, almost unheard over the sounds of the crowd and the skirling music. Arelmra stood with hands clenched against her chest. Her detachment had vanished; she seemed to

cry and groan though her voice could not be heard through the din. The Tanchinaro guards burst into the ranked Gorgons and Warhound, ignoring his hange, sprang past to snatch the golden ring.

The white gown fluttered away; Arelmra stood nude while passionate music celebrated the defeat of the Gorgons and the tragedy of the sheirl's humiliation. Lord Gensifer brought her a robe and conducted her from the field, followed by the despondent Gorgons. Duissane was lifted by exultant Tanchinaros and carried to the Gorgon pedestal while the orchestra played the traditional *Scintillating Glorifications*. Overcome with emotion, Duissane threw up her arms and cried out in joy; laughing and crying she kissed the Tanchinaros, until she confronted Glinnes, and then she drew back and marched off the field.

The Tanchinaros presently assembled at the Magic Trench, to hear the congratulations of their wellwishers.

"Never a team with such decision, such impact, such finesse!"

"The Tanchinaros will make Saurkash famous! Think of it!"

"Now what will Lord Gensifer do with his Gorgons?"

"Maybe he'll try the Tanchinaros with the Solelamut Select, or the Green Star Falifonics."

"I'd put my ozols on the Tanchinaros."

"Tanchinaros!" cried Perinda. "I've just come from the telephone. There's a fifteen thousand ozol game for us in two weeks—if we want it."

"Naturally we want it! Who with?"

"The Vertrice Karpouns."

The arbor became silent; the Karpouns were reckoned one of the five best teams of Trullion.

Perinda said, "They know nothing of the Tanchinaros, except that we've won a few games. I think they expect an easy fifteen thousand ozols."

"Avaricious animals!"

"We're as avaricious as they, perhaps worse."

Perinda continued. "We would play at Welgen. In addition to the treasure—should we win—we would take a fifth of the gate. We might well share out a treasure of close to forty thousand ozols: close to three thousand apiece."

"Not bad for an afternoon's work!"

"That's only if we win."

"For three thousand ozols I'll play alone and win."

"The Karpouns," said Perinda, "are an absolutely proficient team. They've won twenty-eight straight games and their sheirl has never been touched. As for the Tanchinaros—I don't think anybody knows how good we are. The Gorgons today were an excellent team, handicapped by an indecisive captain. The Karpouns are as good or better, and we might well lose our money. So—what's the vote? Shall we play them?"

"For a chance at three thousand ozols I'd play a team of real karpouns*"

CHAPTER 15

WELGEN STADIUM, largest of Jolany

*Karpoun: a feral tiger-like beast of the Shamshin Volcanoes.

Prefecture, was occupied to its fullest capacity. The aristocracy of Jolany, Minch, Straveny and Gulkin Prefectures filled the four pavilions; thirty thousand common folk hunched on benches in the ordinary sections. A large contingent had arrived from Vertrice, three hundred milés west; they occupied a section decorated with orange and green, the Karpoun colors; overhead hung twenty-eight orange and green gonfalons, signifying the twenty-eight successive Karpoun victories.

For an hour the orchestra had been playing hussade music: victory paeans of a dozen famous teams, traditional laments and exaltations, the *War Song of the Miraksian Players* which chilled the nerves and constricted the viscera; the haunting sad-sweet *Moods of Sheirl Hralce*; then, five minutes before game time, the *Glory of Forgotten Heroes*.

The Tanchinaros came on the field and stood by the east pedestal, their silver masks tilted up and back. A moment later the Karpouns appeared beside the west pedestal. They wore dark green jerkins and trousers of striped dark green and orange; like the Tanchinaros they wore their masks tilted back. The teams somberly examined each other across the length of the field. Jehan Aud, the Karpoun captain, veteran of a thousand games, was known to be a tactical genius; no detail escaped his eye; for every permutation of the action he instinctively brought to bear an optimum response. Denzel Warhound was young, innovative, lightning-swift. Aud knew the sureness of experience; Warhound seethed with a multiplicity of schemes. Both men were confident. The Kar-

pouns had the advantage of long association. The Tanchinaros put against them a raw surge of vitality and élan, in a game where these qualities carried great weight. The Karpouns knew that they would win. The Tanchinaros knew that the Karpouns would lose.

The teams waited while the orchestra played *Thresildama*, a traditional salute to the competing teams.

The captains appeared with the sheirls; the orchestra played *Marvels of Grace and Glory*. The Karpoun sheirl was a marvelous creature named Farero, a flashing-eyed blonde girl, radiant with *sashei*. In accordance with some mystical process, when she stepped upon the pedestal she transcended herself, to become her own archetype. Duissane, likewise, became an intensified version of herself: frail, wistful, indomitably courageous, suffused with gallant derring-do and her own distinctive *sashei*, as compelling as that of the sublime Farero.

The players drew down their masks; the flashing silver Tanchinaros looked across at the cruel Karpouns.

The Karpouns won the green light and the first offensive deployment; the teams took their positions on the field. The music altered, each instrument performing a dozen modulations to create a fine golden chord. Dead silence. The forty thousand spectators held their breath.

Green light. The Karpouns struck forward in their celebrated 'Tidal Wave', intending to envelope and smother the Tanchinaros out of hand. Across the moat leapt the forwards; behind came the rovers and close behind

the guards, ferociously seeking contact.

The Tanchinaros were prepared for the tactic. Instead of falling back, the four guards charged forward and the teams collided, like a pair of stampeding herds and the *melee* was indecisive. Some minutes later Glinnes won free and gained the pedestal. He looked Farero the Karpoun sheirl full in the face, and seized her ring. She was pale with excitement and disconcerted; never before had an enemy laid hands on her ring.

The gong sounded; Jehan Aud somewhat glumly paid over eight thousand-ozol certificates. The teams took a rest period. Five Tanchinaros had been tanked and five Karpouns; the honors were even. Warhound was jubilant. "They're a great team, no question! But our guards are unmovable and our forwards are faster! Only in the rovers do they show superiority, and not much there!"

"What will they try next time?" asked Gilweg.

"I suppose more of the same," said Warhound, "but more methodically. They want to pin our forwards and bring their strength to bear."

Play resumed. Aud now used his men conservatively, thrusting and probing, hoping to trap and tank a forward. The crafty Warhound, seeing how the land lay, purposely restrained his forces, and finally out-waited Aud. The Karpouns tried a sudden slash down the center; the Tanchinaro forwards slid to the side and let them pass, then jumped the moat. Lucho climbed the pedestal and seized Farero's ring.

Seven thousand ozols were paid as ransom.

Warhound told the team: "Don't relax! They'll be at their most dangerous! And they haven't won twenty-eight games by luck. I expect a 'Tidal Wave'."

Warhound was correct. The Karpouns stormed the Tanchinaro citadel with all their forces; Glinnes was tanked; Sladene and Wilmer Guff were tanked; Glinnes returned up the ladder in time to tank a Karpoun wing only ten feet from the pedestal, then he was tanked a second time, and before he could return to the field the gong sounded.

For the first time Duissane had felt a hand at her gold ring. Warhound furiously paid back eight thousand ozols.

GLINNES HAD NEVER played a more gruelling game. The Karpouns seemed tireless; they bounded across the field, vaulting and swinging, as if the game had only commenced. He could not know that to the Karpouns the Tanchinaro forwards seemed unpredictable flickers of silver and black, wild as devils, so unnaturally agile that they seemed to run on air, while the Tanchinaro guards loomed over the field like four inexorable Dooms.

Up and down the field moved the battle; step by step the Tanchinaros thrust against the Karpoun pedestal, the forwards wicked and remorseless, driving, bumping, swinging, thrusting. The roar of the crowd faded to the back of consciousness; all reality was compressed into the field, the runs and ways, the waters glinting in the sunlight. A heavy cloud passed briefly over the sun. Almost at this instant Glinnes saw a path open through the orange

and green: a trap? With the last energy of his legs he darted forward, around, over and through. Orange and green yelled hoarsely; the Karpoun masks, once so sage and austere, seemed contorted in pain. Glinnes gained the pedestal, to seize the gold ring at Farero's waist and now he must pull the ring, and lay the blue-eyed maiden bare before forty thousand exalted eyes. The music soared, stately and tragic; Glinnes' hand twitched and hesitated; he did not dare to shame this golden creature . . . The dark cloud was not a cloud; three black hulls settled upon the field, blotting out the light of afternoon. The music stopped short; from the public-address came a poignant cry: "Starmenters! Take—" The voice broke off in a gabble of words, and a new harsh voice spoke: "Keep your seats. Do not move or stir about."

Glinnes nonetheless took Farero's arm, jerked her from the pedestal, down the ladder to the tank under the field. "What are you doing?" she gasped, pulling back in horror.

"I'm trying to save your life," said Glinnes. "The starmenters would never leave you behind, and you'd never see your home again."

The girl's voice quavered. "Are we safe under here?"

"I wouldn't think so. We'll leave by the outlet sump. Hurry; it's at the far end."

They splashed through the water at best speed: under the ways, past the center moat, and now down the other ladder came Duissane, her face pinched and white with fear. Glinnes called to her, "Come along; we'll leave by the

sump; perhaps they'll neglect to guard it."

At the corner of the tank the water flowed out and down a flume into a narrow little waterway. 'Glinnes slid down the flume and jumped to a ledge of ill-smelling black mud. Next came Duissane, clutching the white gown about herself. Glinnes pulled her over to the mud-bank; she lost her footing and sat back into the muck. Glinnes could not restrain a grin. "You did that on purpose!" she cried in a throbbing voice.

"I did not!"

"You did!"

"Whatever you say."

Farero came down the flume; Glinnes caught her and pulled her over to the ledge. Duissane struggled to her feet; the three looked dubiously along the channel, which meandered out of sight under arching hushberries and pipwillows. The water seemed dark and deep; a faint scent of merling hung in the air. The prospect of swimming or even wading was unthinkable. Moored across the way was a crude little canoe; evidently the property of a couple of boys who had gained illicit entry to the field through the sump.

Glinnes clambered over the flume to the canoe, which was half-full of water and wallowed precariously under his weight. He bailed out a few gallons of water, then dared delay no longer. He pushed the boat across the water; Duissane stepped in, then Farero, and the water rose almost to the gunwhales. Glinnes handed the bailing bucket to Duissane, who went scowling to work. Glinnes paddled cautiously out into the waterway and behind them, from the

stadium, came the rasp of the announcement system: "Those folk in Pavilions A,B,C and D will file to the south exits. Not all will be taken; we have an exact list of those we want. Be brisk and make no trouble; we'll kill anyone who hinders us."

Unreal! thought Glinnes. An outrageous avalanche of events: excitement, color, passion, music, and victory—now fear and flight, with two sheirls. One hated him. The other, Farero, examined him from the side of her magnificent sea-blue eyes. Now she took the bucket from Duissane, who sulkily scraped the mud from her gown. What a contrast, thought Glinnes; Farero rueful but resigned—indeed she probably preferred flight through the sump to nudity on the pedestal. Duissane obviously resented every instant of discomfort and seemed to hold Glinnes personally responsible.

The waterway curved; a hundred yards ahead gleamed Welgen Sound, with South Ocean beyond. Glinnes paddled more confidently; they had escaped the starmenters. A massive raid! and no doubt long-planned for a time when all the wealthy folk of the prefecture came together. There would be captives taken for ransom, and girls taken for solace. The captives would return crestfallen and impoverished; the girls would never be seen again. The stadium vaults would yield at least a hundred thousand ozols and the treasures of the two teams would supply another thirty thousand, and even the Welgen banks might be plundered.

The waterway widened and meandered away from the shore across a wide mud-flat, pimpled with gas

craters. To the east ran Welgen Spit, on the other side of which lay the harbor; to the west the shore extended into the late afternoon haze. Under the open sky Glinnes felt exposed: unreasonably so, he told himself; the starmenters could not now afford the time to pursue them, even should they deign to note the wallowing canoe. Farero had never ceased to bail. Water entered through several leaks and Glinnes wondered how long the boat would stay afloat. The shuddering black slime of the mud-flats was uninviting; Glinnes made for the nearest of the wooded islets which rose from the sound: a hummock of land fifty yards across.

The boat rocked upon an ocean swell and shipped water. Farero bailed as fast as possible; Duissane scooped with her hands and they reached the islet as the canoe sank under them. With enormous relief Glinnes pulled the canoe up the little apron of beach. Even as he stepped ashore, the three starmenter ships rose into view. They slanted up into the southern sky and were gone, with all their precious cargo.

Farero heaved a sigh. "Except for you," she told Glinnes, "I'd be aboard one of those ships."

"I would also be up there, except for myself," snapped Duissane.

Aha, thought Glinnes, here is a source for her annoyance: she feels neglected.

Duissane jumped ashore. "And what will we do out here?"

"Somebody will be along sooner or later. In the meantime, we wait."

"I don't care to wait," said Duissane. "Once the boat is bailed out we can row back to shore. Must we sit shivering on

this miserable little spot of land?"

"What else do you suggest? The boat leaks and the water swarms with merling. Still, I might be able to mend the leaks."

Duissane went to sit on a chunk of driftwood. Whelm ships streaked in from the west, circled the area, and one dropped down into Welgen. "Too late, much too late," said Glinnes. He bailed the canoe dry and wadded moss into such cracks as he could find. Farero came to watch him. She said, "You were kind to me."

Glinnes looked up at her.

"When you might have pulled the ring, you hesitated. You didn't want to shame me."

Glinnes nodded and went back to work on the boat.

"This may be why your sheirl is angry."

Glinnes looked sidewise toward Duissane who sat scowling across the water. "She is seldom in a good humor."

Farero said thoughtfully: "To be sheirl is a very strange experience, one feels the most extraordinary impulses . . . Today I lost, but the star-menters saved me. Perhaps she feels cheated."

"She's lucky to be here, and not aboard one of the ships."

"I think that she is in love with you and jealous of me."

Glinnes looked up in astonishment. "In love with me?" He turned another covert glance toward Duissane. "You must be wrong. She hates me. I've ample evidence of this."

"It may well be. I am no expert in these affairs."

Glinnes rose from his work, studied the canoe with gloomy dissatisfaction. "I don't trust that moss—especially with the avness wind coming from the land."

"Now that we're dry it's not unpleasant. Though my people must be very worried, and I'm hungry."

"We can find shore food," said Glinnes. "We'll have a fine supper—except that we lack fire. Still—a plantain tree grows yonder."

Glinnes climbed the tree and tossed fruit down to Farero. When they returned to the beach, Duissane and the canoe were gone. She was already fifty yards distant, paddling for that waterway by which they had left the stadium. Glinnes gave a bark of sardonic laughter. "She is so in love with me and so jealous of you that she leaves us marooned together."

Farero, flushing pink, said, "It is not impossible."

For a period they watched the canoe. The offshore breeze gave Duissane difficulty. She stopped paddling and bailed for a moment or two; the moss evidently had failed to staunch the leaks. When again she began to paddle she rocked the canoe and clutching at the gunwhale lost the paddle. The offshore breeze blew her back, past the isle where Glinnes and Farero stood watching. Duissane ignored them.

Glinnes and Farero climbed upon the central hummock and watched the receding canoe, wondering whether Duissane might be swept out to sea. She drifted among the islets and the canoe was lost to sight.

The two returned to the beach. Glinnes said, "If we had a fire we could be

quite comfortable, at least for a day or so . . . I don't care for raw sea-stuff."

"Nor I," said Farero.

Glinnes found a pair of dry sticks and attempted to rub up a fire, without success. He threw the sticks away in disgust. "The nights are warm, but a fire is pleasant."

Farero looked here, there, everywhere but directly at Glinnes. "Do you think that we'll be here so long?"

"We can't leave till a boat comes past. It might be an hour; it might be a week."

Farero spoke in something of a stammer. "And will you want to make love to me?"

Glinnes studied her for a moment, and reaching out touched her golden hair. "You are beautiful beyond words. I would take joy in becoming your first lover."

Farero looked away. "We are alone . . . My team today was defeated, and I won't be sheirl again. Still—" she stopped speaking, then pointed and said in a soft flat voice, "Yonder passes a boat."

Glinnes hesitated. Farero made no urgent movements. Glinnes said reluctantly, "We must do something about silly Duissane and the canoe." He went to the water's edge and shouted; the boat, a power skiff driven by a lone fisherman, altered course, and presently Glinnes and Farero were aboard. The fisherman had come in from the open sea and had noticed no drifting canoe; quite possibly Duissane had gone ashore on one of the islets.

The fisherman took his boat around the end of the spit and into Welgen

dock; Farero and Glinnes rode in a cab to the stadium. The driver had much to say regarding the starmenter raid. "— never an exploit to match it! They took the three hundred richest folk of the region and at least a hundred maidens, poor things, who'll never be put up for ransom. The Whelm came too late; the starmenters knew precisely who to take and who to ignore. And they timed their operation to the second and were gone. They'll all earn fortunes in ransom!"

At the stadium Glinnes bade Sheirl Farero a muted farewell. He ran to the dressing room, slipped off his Tanchinaro uniform, resumed his ordinary clothes.

The cab carried him back to the dock, where Glinnes hired a small runabout. He drove around the spit, out into Welgen Sound. The flat light of avness painted sea, sky, islets and shore in pallid and subtle colors to which no name could be applied. The silence seemed surreal; the gurgle of water under the keel was almost an intrusion.

He passed the islet where he had originally landed with Farero and Duissane, and went beyond, out into the area where the canoe had drifted. He circled the first of the islets, but saw no sign either of canoe or Duissane. The next three islets were also vacant. The sea spread vast and calm beyond the three little islets yet to be investigated, and on the second of these he spied a slender figure in a white gown, waving frantically.

When Duissane recognized the man who drove the boat, she abruptly stopped waving. Glinnes leapt ashore and pulled the boat up the beach. He

secured the bow line to a crooked root, then turned and looked about. The flat low line of the mainland was dim in the inconclusive light. The sea heaved slow and supple, as if constricted under a film of silk. Glinnes looked at Duissane, who had maintained a cold silence. "What a quiet place. I doubt if even the merlings swim out this far."

Duissane looked at the boat. "If you came out to get me, I am now ready to leave."

"There's no hurry," said Glinnes. "None whatever. I brought bread and meat and wine. We can bake plantains and quorls* and maybe a curset**. We'll have a picnic while the stars come out."

Duissane compressed her lips petulantly and looked off toward the shore. Glinnes stepped forward, to stand only a foot away from her: as close as he had ever been. She looked up at him without warmth, her tawny-gray eyes shifting, or so it seemed to Glinnes, through a dozen moods and emotions. Glinnes bent his head, and putting an arm around her shoulders, kissed her lips, which were cold and unresponsive. She pushed him away with a thrust of her hands, and seemed suddenly to recover her voice. "You're all alike, you Trills! You reek with cauch; your brain is a single lecherous gland. Do you aspire only to turpitude? Have you no dignity, no self-respect?"

Glinnes laughed. "Are you hungry?"

"No. I have a dinner engagement and I will be late unless we leave at once."

"Indeed. Is that why you stole the canoe?"

"I stole nothing. The canoe was as much mine as yours. You seemed content to ogle that insipid Karpoun girl; I wonder that you're not still at it."

"She feared that you would be offended."

Duissane raised her eyebrows high. "Why should I think twice, or even once, about your conduct? Her concern embarrasses me."

"It is no great matter," said Glinnes. "I wonder if you would gather firewood while I fetch plantains?"

Duissane opened her mouth to refuse, then decided that such an act was self-defeating. She found a few dry twigs which she tossed haughtily down upon the beach. She scrutinized the boat which was pulled far up on the beach, and beyond her strength to float. The starting key likewise had been removed from the lock.

Glinnes brought plantains, kindled a fire, dug up four fine quorls, which he cleaned, rinsed in the sea and set to baking with the plantains. He brought bread and meat from the boat, and spread a cloth on the sand. Duissane watched from a distance.

Glinnes opened the flask of wine and offered it to Duissane.

"I prefer to drink no wine."

"Do you intend to eat?"

Duissane touched the tip of her tongue to her lips. "And then what do you plan?"

"We will relax on the beach and star-watch, and who knows what else?"

"Oh you are a despicable person; I want nothing to do with you. Untidy and gluttonous, like all the Trills."

*Quorls: a type of mollusc living in beach sand.

**Curset: a crab-like sea-insect.

"Well, at least I'm not worse. Settle yourself; we'll eat and watch the sunset."

"I'm hungry, so I'll eat," said Duissane. "Then we must go back. You know how Trevanyi feel about indiscriminate amorousness. Also, never forget, I am the Tanchinaro sheirl, and a virgin!"

Glinnes made a sign to indicate that these considerations were of no great cogency. "Changes occur in all our lives."

Duissane stiffened in outrage. "Is this how you plan to soil the team's sheirl? What a scoundrel you are, who so sanctimoniously insisted upon purity and then told such vicious lies about me."

"I told no lies," declared Glinnes. "I never even told the truth, how you and your family robbed me and left me for the merlings, and how you laughed to see me lying for dead."

Duissane said somewhat feebly: "You got only what you deserved."

"I still owe your father and your brothers a knock or two," said Glinnes. "As for you, I am of two minds. Eat, drink wine, fortify yourself."

"I have no appetite. None whatever. I do not think it just that a person should be so ill-treated."

Glinnes gave no answer and began to eat.

Presently Duissane joined him. "You must remember," she told him, "that if you carry out your threat, you will have betrayed not only me, but all your-Tanchinaros, and befouled yourself as well. Then, you will be faced with an accounting of another sort, from my family. They will dog you to the end of

time; never will you know a moment's peace. Thirdly you will gain all my contempt: and for what? The relief of your gland. How can you use the word 'love', when you really plan revenge? And this of a most paltry kind. As if I were an animal, or something without emotion. Certainly; use me if you wish, or kill me, but bear in mind my utter contempt for all your disgusting habits. Furthermore—"

"Woman," roared Glinnes, "be kind enough to shut your mouth. You have blighted the day and the evening as well. Eat your meal in silence and we will return to Welgen." Scowling, Glinnes hunched down upon the sand. He ate plantains, quorls, meat, and bread; he drank two flasks of wine while Duissane watched from the corner of her eye, a peculiar expression on her face, half-sneer, half-smirk.

When he had eaten, Glinnes leaned back against a hummock and mused for a period upon the sunset. With absolute fidelity the colors were reflected in the sea, except for an occasional languid black cusp in the lee of a swell.

Duissane sat in silence, arms clasped around her knees.

Glinnes lurched to his feet and thrust the boat into the water. He signaled Duissane. "Get in." She obeyed; the boat returned across the sound, around the point of the spit, and up to the Welgen dock.

A large white yacht floated beside the jetty, which Glinnes recognized to be the property of Lord Gensifer. Lights glowed from the portholes, signifying activity aboard.

Glinnes looked askance at the yacht;

would Lord Gensifer be hosting a party tonight, after the starmenter raid? Strange. But then, the ways of the aristocrats always had been beyond his comprehension. Duissane, to his amazement, jumped from the boat and ran to the yacht. She climbed the gang-plank and vanished into the saloon. Glinnes heard Lord Gensifer's voice: "Duissane, my dear young lady, whatever—" The remainder of his sentence was muffled.

Glinnes shrugged and returned the boat to the rental depot. As he walked back down the dock, Lord Gensifer hailed him from the yacht. "Glinnes! Come aboard for a moment, there's a good fellow!"

Glinnes sauntered indifferently up the gangway. Lord Gensifer clapped him on the back and conducted him into the saloon. Glinnes saw a dozen folk in fashionable garments, apparently aristocratic friends of Lord Gensifer, and also Akadie, Marucha, and Duissane, who now wore over her sheer white gown a red cloak, evidently borrowed from one of the ladies present. "Here then is our hero!" declared Lord Gensifer. "With cool resource he saved two lovely sheirls from the starmenters; in our great grief we at least can be thankful for this boon."

Glinnes looked in wonder about the saloon; he felt as if he were living a particularly absurd dream. Akadie, Lord Gensifer, Marucha, Duissane, himself: what a strange mix of people!

"I hardly know what happened today," said Glinnes, "beyond the bare fact of the raid."

"The bare fact is about all anyone

knows," said Akadie. He seemed unusually subdued and neutral, and careful in his choice of words. "The starmenters knew exactly who they wanted. They took exactly three hundred folk of substance, and about two hundred girls as well. The three hundred are to be ransomed for a minimum of a hundred thousand ozols apiece. No ransom prices have been set on the girls, but we will do our best to buy them back."

"Then they've already been in communication?"

"Indeed, indeed. The plans were carefully made, and each person's financial capacity was carefully gauged."

Lord Gensifer said with facetious self-deprecation: those left behind have suffered a loss of prestige, which we keenly resent."

Akadie went on. "For reasons apparently good and sufficient, I have been appointed collector of the ransom: for which effort I am to receive a fee. No great amount, I assure you: in fact, five thousand ozols will requite my work."

Glinnes listened dumb-founded. "So the total ransom will be three hundred times a hundred thousand, which is—"

"Thirty million ozols: a good day's work."

"Unless they end up on the prutanshyr."

Akadie made a sour face. "A barbaric relict. What benefit do we derive from torture? The starmenters come back regardless."

"The public is edified," said Lord Gensifer. "Think of the kidnapped maidens—one of whom might have been my good friend Duissane!" He

placed his arm around Duissane's shoulders and gave her a mock-fraternal squeeze. "Is, then, the revenge too severe? Not to my way of thinking."

Glinnes blinked and gaped back and forth between Lord Gensifer and Duissane, who seemed to be smiling at a secret joke. Had the world gone mad? Or was he in truth living a preposterous dream?

Akadie formed a quizzical arch with his eyebrows. "The starmenters' sins are real enough; let them suffer."

One of Lord Gensifer's friends asked, "By the way, which particular band of starmenters is responsible?"

"There has been no attempt at anonymity," said Akadie. We have attracted the personal attention of Sagmondo Bandalio—Sagmondo the Stern—who is as wicked as any."

Glinnes knew the name well; Sagmondo Bandalio had long been the quarry of the Whelm: "Bandalio is a terrible man," said Glinnes. "He extends no mercy."

"Some say he is a starmenter only for sport," Akadie remarked. "They say he has a dozen identities about the cluster, and that he could live forever on the fortunes he has gained."

The group mused in silence; here was evil on a scale so vast that it became awesome.

Glinnes said, "Somewhere in the prefecture is a spy, someone intimate with all the aristocrats, someone who knows the exact level of every fortune."

"That statement must be reckoned accurate," said Akadie.

"Who could it be?" pondered Lord Gensifer. "Who could it be?"

And all the persons present considered the matter and each formed his private speculation.

CHAPTER 16

THE TANCHINAROS, by defeating the Karpouns, had done themselves a disservice. Sagmondo Bandalio and his starmenters had taken their treasure, and the team was without resources. Because of their demonstrated abilities, Perinda could schedule no thousand ozol or two thousand ozol games; they lacked the treasure to challenge any teams in the ten thousand ozol class.

A week after the Karpoun game the Tanchinaros met at Rabendary Island, and Perinda explained the sorry state of affairs. "I've found only three teams willing to play us, and not one will risk their sheirl for less than ten thousand ozols. Another matter: we lack a sheirl. Duissane seems to have caught the interest of a certain lord, which naturally was her ambition. Now neither she nor Tammi choose to risk the exposure of her precious hide."

"Bah!" said Lucho. "Duissane never loved hussade in the first place."

"Naturally not," said Warhound. "She's Trevanyi. Have you ever seen a Trevanyi play hussade? She's the first Trevanyi sheirl I've ever known."

"Trevanyi play their own games," said Gilweg.

"Like 'Knives and Gullets,'" said Glinnes.

"And 'Trills and Robbers'."

"And 'Merling, Merling, Who's Got the Cadaver'."

"And 'Hide and Sneak'."

Perinda said: "We can always recruit

a sheirl. Our problem is money.

Glinnes said grudgingly, "I'd put up my five thousand ozols if I thought I'd get it back."

Warhound said, "I could scrape up a thousand, one way or another."

"That's six thousand," said Perinda. "I'll put in a thousand—or rather, I can borrow a thousand from my father . . . Who else? Who else? Come then, you miserly mud-thumpers, bring out your wealth."

TWO WEEKS LATER the Tanchinaros played the Ocean Island Kanchedos, at the great Ocean Island Stadium, for a twenty-five thousand ozol purse, with fifteen thousand hazarded by each team and ten thousand by the stadium. The new Tanchinaro sheirl was Sacharissa Simone, a girl from Fal Lal Mountain, pleasant, naive and pretty, but lacking in that imponderable quality *sashei*. There was likewise general doubt as to her virginity, but no one wanted to make an issue of the matter. "Let's all of us have a night with her," grumbled Warhound, "and resolve the question to everybody's satisfaction."

Whatever the reason, the Tanchinaros played sluggishly and committed a number of startling errors. The Kanchedos won an easy three-ring victory. Sacharissa's possibly innocent body was displayed in every detail to thirty-five thousand spectators, and Glinnes found himself with only three or four hundred ozols to his purse. In a state of stupefied depression he returned to Rabendary Island, and flinging himself down in one of the old string chairs he spent the evening staring across the broad at Ambal Isle. What a chaotic

mess he had made of his life! The Tanchinaros—impoverished, humiliated, on the verge of fragmentation. Ambal Isle—now even farther from his grasp than ever. Duissane, a girl who had worked a curious enthrallment upon him, had now fixed her ambitions upon the aristocracy, and Glinnes, previously only luke-warm, now roiled at the thought of Duissane in another man's bed.

TWO DAYS AFTER the catastrophic game with the Kanchedos, Glinnes rode the ferry into Welgen to find a buyer for twenty sacks of his excellent Rabendary musk-apples: a matter soon arranged. With an hour to wait for the return trip Glinnes stopped for a bite of lunch at a small restaurant half-in-doors, half-out under the shade of a fulgeria arbor. He drank a pot of beer and gnawed at bread and cheese, and watched the folk of Welgen move past about their affairs . . . Here passed a group of true Fanschers: sober young folk, erect and alert, frowning into the distance as if absorbed in concepts of great portent . . . And here came Akadie, walking quickly, with his head lowered, his Fanscher-style jacket flapping out to the sides. Glinnes called out as he passed, "Akadie! Drop yourself into a chair, take a pot of beer."

Akadie halted as if he had struck an invisible obstruction. He peered into the shade to isolate the source of the voice, glanced over his shoulder and ducked hastily into a chair beside Glinnes. His face was pinched; his voice when he spoke was sharp and nervous. "I think I've put them aside, or at least I hope so."

"Oh?" Glinnes looked along the way Akadie had come. "Who have you put aside?"

Akadie's response was typically oblique. "I should have refused the commission; it has brought me only anxiety. Five thousand ozols! When I am dogged by avaricious Trevanyi, awaiting only a moment of carelessness. What a farce. They can take their thirty million ozols, together with my paltry five thousand, and fabricate the most expensive bumstopper in the marveling memory of the human universe."

"In other words," said Glinnes, "you have collected the thirty million ozols ransom?"

Akadie gave a peevish nod. "I assure you, it is not real money: that is to say, the five thousand ozols which becomes my fee represents five thousand spendable ozols. I carry thirty million ozols in this case—" here he nudged a small black case with a silver clasp. "—but it seems like so much wadded paper."

"To you."

"Precisely." Akadie peered over his shoulder once again. "Other folk are less adept in abstract symbology; or more accurately, they use different symbols. These tokens to me are fire and smoke, pain and fear. Others perceive an entirely different set of referents: palaces, space-yachts, perfumes and pleasure."

"In short, you fear that the money will be stolen from you?"

"Akadie's nimble mind had far outdistanced a categorical response. "Can you imagine the vicissitudes liable to the man who withheld thirty million

ozols from Sagmondo Bandiolo? The conversation might go in this fashion: Bandolio: 'I now require of you, Janno Akadie, the thirty million ozols entrusted to your care.' Akadie: 'You must be brave and forebearing, since I no longer have the money.' Bandolio: . . . Alas. My imagination falters. I can conceive no further. Would he be cold? What he rave? Would he utter a negligent laugh?"

"If indeed you are robbed," said Glinnes, "one small benefit will be the gratification of your curiosity."

Akadie acknowledged the remark with only a sour side-glance. "If I could surely identify someone, or something; if I knew precisely whom or what to avoid . . ." He left the sentence unfinished.

"Have you noticed any specific threat? Or are you just nervous?"

"I am nervous, to be sure, but this is my usual state. I loathe discomfort, I dread pain, I refuse even to acknowledge the possibility of death. All these circumstances now seem to hover close."

"Thirty million ozols is an impressive sum," said Glinnes wistfully. "Personally, I need only twelve thousand of them."

Akadie pushed the case toward Glinnes. "Here you are; take whatever you require and explain the lack to Bandolio . . . But no." He jerked the case back once more. "I am not allowed this option."

"I am puzzled on one account," said Glinnes. "Since you are so anxious, why do you not simply place the money in a bank? Yonder for instance is the Bank of Welgen, twenty seconds from

where we sit."

Akadie sighed. "If only it were that easy . . . My instructions are to keep the money ready to hand, for delivery to Bandolio's messenger."

"And when does he come?"

Akadie rolled his eyes up toward the fulgeria. "Five minutes? Five days? Five weeks? I wish I knew."

"It seems somewhat unreasonable," said Glinnes. "Still, the starmenters work by the systems they find most useful. And think! A year from today the episode will provide you many a merry anecdote."

"I can think only of this moment," grumbled Akadie. "This case sits in my lap like a red-hot anvil."

"Who exactly do you fear?"

Even at his most fretful, Akadie could not resist a didactic analysis. "Three groups hotly yearn for ozols: the Fanschers, that they may buy land, tools, information and energy; the noble folk, in order to refurbish their flaccid fortunes; and the Trevanyi, who are naturally avaricious. Only moments ago I discovered two Trevanyi walking unobtrusively behind me."

"This may or may not be significant," said Glinnes.

"All very well to deprecate." Akadie rose to his feet. "Are you returning to Rabendary? Why not ride out with me?"

They walked to the dock and in Akadie's white runabout set off eastward along the Inner Broad. Between the Lace Islands, across Ripil Broad they sped, past Saurkash, then along narrow Athenry Water and out upon Fleharish Broad, where they observed a rakish black and purple craft

darting back and forth at great speed.

"Speaking of Trevanyi," said Glinnes, "notice who joy-rides with Lord Gensifer."

"I noticed her," Akadie thoughtfully stowed his black case under the stern seat.

Lord Gensifer drove his boat through a sportive caracole, projecting a long feather of spume into the air, then rushed hissing forward to overtake Akadie and Glinnes. Akadie, murmuring an objurgation, allowed his boat to coast to a standstill; Lord Gensifer drew up alongside. Duissane, wearing a charming pale blue gown, glanced sidewise with an expression of sulky boredom, but made no other acknowledgment. Lord Gensifer was in one of his most expansive moods. "And where are you bound this lovely afternoon, with such a pair of handdog looks about you? Off to rob Lord Milfred's duck preserve, or so I'd wager." Lord Gensifer here made waggish allusion to an ancient joke of the district. "What a pair of rogues, to be sure."

Akadie replied in his most polished voice. "I fear we have more important concerns, beautiful day or not."

Lord Gensifer made an easy gesture to signify that the course of his little joke was run. "How does your collection progress?"

"I took in the last moneys this morning," said Akadie stiffly. The subject was clearly one he did not care to pursue, but Lord Gensifer tactlessly continued. "Just hand me over a million or two of those ozols; Bandolio would hardly feel the difference."

"I'd be pleased to hand you over the

whole thirty million," said Akadie, "and you could settle accounts with Sagmondo Bandolio."

"Thank you," said Lord Gensifer, "but I think not." He peered into Akadie's boat. "You really carry the money about with you then? Ah, there, in the bilge as casual as you please. Do you realize that boats sometimes sink? What would you say then to Sagmondo the Stern?"

Akadie's voice cracked under the strain of his displeasure. "The contingency is most remote."

"Undoubtedly true. But we're boring Duissane, who cares nothing for such matters. She refuses to visit me at Gensifer Manor; think of it! I've tempted her with luxury and elegance; she'll have none of it. Trevanyi through and through. Wild as a bird! You're sure you can't spare even a million ozols? What about half a million? A paltry hundred thousand?"

Akadie smiled with steely patience and shook his head. With a wave of his hand Lord Gensifer pulled back the throttle; the purple and silver boat lunged forward, swept around in a slashing arc and drove north toward the Prefecture Commons, the heel of which closed off the tip of Fleharish Broad.

Akadie and Glinnes proceeded more sedately. At Rabandary Island, Akadie chose to stop ashore for a cup of tea, but sat on the edge of his chair peering first up Ilfish Way, then across Ambal Broad, then through the row of pomanders which screened Farwan Water; these, with their tall waving blades, created a sense of furtive motion, which made Akadie more nervous than ever.

Glinnes brought forth a flask of old wine to sooth Akadie's apprehension, to such good effect that the afternoon waned into pale avness. At last Akadie felt obliged to go home. "If you like you can accompany me. Truth to tell, I'm a trifle on edge."

Glinnes agreed to follow Akadie in his own boat, but Akadie stood rubbing his chin as if reluctant to depart. "Perhaps you should telephone Marucha, and let her know that we are on the way. Inquire also if she has noticed unusual circumstances of any sort whatever."

"Just as you like." Glinnes went to make the call. Marucha was indeed relieved to learn that Akadie was on his way home. Unusual circumstances? None of consequence. Perhaps a few more boats in the vicinity, or it might have been the same boat passing back and forth; she had hardly noticed.

Glinnes found Akadie on the end of the dock, frowning up Farwan Water. He set off in his white runabout and Glinnes followed close behind, all the way to Clinkhammer Broad, clear, calm and empty in the mauve-gray light of evening. Glinnes saw Akadie safely to the dock, then swung about and returned to Rabandary.

Hardly had he arrived home before the telephone gong sounded. Akadie's face appeared on the screen with an expression of lugubrious triumph. "It went exactly as I had expected," said Akadie. "There they were, waiting for me behind the boat-house: four of them and I'm sure Trevanyi, though they all wore masks."

"What happened?" Glinnes demanded, for Akadie seemed intent on

arranging his tale to the best dramatic effect.

"Just what I expected; that's what happened," snapped Akadie. "They overpowered me and took the black case; then they fled in their boat."

"So: thirty million ozols down the chute."

"Ha hah! Nothing of the sort. Only a locked black case packed with grass and dirt. There will be some sorry Drossets when they force the lock. I say Drossets advisedly, for I recognized the peculiar stance of the older son, and Vang Drosset's posture is also characteristic."

"You mentioned—*four*?"

Akadie managed a grim smile. "One of the things was somewhat frail. This person stood aside and kept a lookout."

"Indeed. Then where is the money?"

"This is why I called. I left it in the bait-box on your dock, and my forethought was amply justified. What I want you to do is this. Go out on your dock and make sure there are no observers. Take the foil-wrapped packet from the box and carry it inside your house, and I will call for it tomorrow."

Glinnes scowled at Akadie's image. "So now I'm in charge of your confounded money. I don't want my throat cut any more than you. I fear I must charge you a professional fee."

Akadie instantly emerged from his preoccupation. "How absurd! You incur no risks; no one knows where the money is—"

"Someone might make a thirty million ozol guess. Don't forget who saw us together earlier today."

Akadie laughed somewhat shakily. "Your agitation is excessive. Still, if it

gives you comfort, station yourself with your hand-gun where you can watch for trespassers; in fact this is perhaps the judicious course. We'll both feel better for the vigilance."

Glinnes stuttered in indignation. Before he could speak, Akadie made a reassuring gesture and dimmed the screen.

Glinnes jumped to his feet and strode back and forth across the room. Then he brought forth his hand-gun, even as Akadie had suggested, and went out on the dock. The waterways were empty. He made a circuit of his house, walking wide around the pricklesbury bushes. So far as he could determine there was no one on Rabendary Island but himself.

The bait-box exerted an intolerable fascination. He went back out on the dock, and flipped up the lid. There indeed: a packet wrapped in metal foil. Glinnes took it forth and after a moment of indecision carried it into the house. What did thirty million ozols look like? No harm in soothing his curiosity. He unfolded the covering, to find a wad of folded periodicals. Glinnes stared down aghast. He started for the telephone, then stopped short. If Akadie knew of the situation, his manner would be intolerably dry and jocular. If, on the other hand, Akadie were ignorant of the substitution, the news would shatter him, and might well be postponed until the morning.

Glinnes rewrapped the packet and replaced it in the bait box; then he brewed himself a cup of tea and took it out on the verandah, where he sat brooding across the water. Night now fully encompassed the fens; the sky was paved

with stars. Glinnes decided that Akadie himself had transferred the money, leaving the foil-wrapped parcel as a decoy. A typically subtle joke . . . Glinnes turned his head at the gurgle of water. A merling? No: a boat approaching slowly and softly from the direction of Ilfish Water. He jumped down from the verandah and went to stand in the deep shade under the sombarilla tree.

The air was absolutely quiet. The water lay like polished moonstone. Glinnes squinted through the starlight and presently perceived a nondescript skiff with a single, rather frail, person aboard: Akadie returning for his ozols? No. Glinnes' heart gave a queer quick throb. He started to step forward from the shade, then halted and drew back.

The boat drifted to the dock. The person aboard stepped ashore and dropped the mooring line over a bollard. Quietly through the starlight she came, to halt in front of the verandah. "Glinnes! Glinnes!" Her voice was hushed and secretive, like the call of a night bird.

Glinnes watched. Duissane stood indecisive, shoulders drooping. Then she went up on the verandah and looked into the dark house. "Glinnes!"

Glinnes came slowly forward. "I'm over here."

Duissane waited while he crossed the verandah. "Did you expect me?"

"No," said Glinnes. "Not really."

"Do you know why I came?"

Glinnes slowly shook his head. "But I am frightened."

Duissane laughed quietly. "Why should you be frightened?"

"Because once you gave me to the

merlings."

"Are you afraid of death?" Duissane moved a step closer. "What is there to fear? I have no fear. A soft-winged black bird carries our ghosts to the Vale of Xian, and there we wander, at peace."

"The folk eaten by merlings leave no ghosts. And in this connection, where are your father and your brothers? Arriving by way of the forest?"

"No. They would grind their teeth if they knew I was here."

Glinnes said, "Walk around the house with me."

Without protest she came with him. To the best effort of Glinnes' senses, Rabendary Island was deserted except for themselves.

"Listen," said Duissane. "Hear the tree-croakers . . ."

Glinnes nodded shortly. "I heard them. There's no one in the forest."

"Then do you believe me?"

"You've told me only that your father and brothers aren't here. I believe that, because I can't see them."

"Let's go into the house."

Inside the house Glinnes turned up the light. Duissane dropped her cape. She wore only sandals and a thin frock. She carried no weapon.

"Today," she said, "I rode in a boat with Lord Gensifer, and I saw you. I decided that tonight I would come here."

"Why?" asked Glinnes, not altogether puzzled, but not altogether certain.

Duissane put her hands on his shoulders. "Do you remember on the little island, how I jeered at you?"

"Very well indeed."

"You were too vulnerable. I longed for your harshness. I wanted you to laugh at my words, to take me and hold me close. I would have melted on that instant."

"You dissembled very well," said Glinnes. "As I remember, you called me 'despicable, untidy and gluttonous'. I was convinced that you hated me."

Duissane made a sad grimace. "I have never hated you, never. But you must know that I am solitary and wayward, and I am slow to love. Look at me now." She tilted up her face. "Do you think I am beautiful?"

"Oh indeed. I've never thought otherwise."

"Hold me close, then, and kiss me."

Glinnes turned his head and listened. From Rabendary Forest the susurration of the tree-croakers had never ceased. He looked back at the face close under his own. It swam with unusual emotions, which he could not define and which therefore troubled him; he had never seen such a look in any other eyes. He sighed; how difficult to love a person so intensely distrusted! How far more difficult not to do so! He bent his head and kissed Duissane; it was as if he had never kissed anyone before. She smelled of a fragrant herb, of lemon, and, vaguely, of wood-smoke. With his pulses racing he knew he now could never turn back; if she had set out to enthrall him she had succeeded; he felt he could never get enough of her. But what of Duissane? From around her neck she drew a heart-shaped locket on a chain, which she pressed open, and took forth a pink heart-shaped tablet. Glinnes recognized it for lovers' cauch. With nervous fin-

gers Duissane broke the tablet and gave Glinnes half. "I have never touched cauch before," she said. "I have never wanted to love anyone before. Pour us a goblet of wine."

Glinnes brought a flask of green wine from the cupboard and poured full a goblet. He went to the verandah and looked up and down the water. It lay calm and dreaming, broken only by the ripple of a merling who somewhere had surfaced.

"What did you expect to see?" asked Duissane softly.

"Half a dozen Drossets," said Glinnes, "with eyes spurting fire and knives in their mouths."

"Glinnes," said Duissane earnestly, "I swear to you that no one knows I am here but you and I. Are you not aware of how my people regard virginity? They would spare me no more than you."

Glinnes brought the goblet of wine across the room. Duissane opened her mouth. "Do as a lover would."

Glinnes placed the cauch on the tip of her tongue; she washed it down with wine. "Now you."

Glinnes opened his mouth. She put her half of the lovers' tablet upon his tongue. It might be cauch, thought Glinnes, or she might have substituted a soporific, or a poison drug. He held the tablet in front of his teeth and taking the goblet drank wine, and then made shift to eject the tablet into the goblet. He took the goblet to the sideboard, then turned to face Duissane. She had slipped off her gown; she stood nude and graceful before him, and Glinnes never had seen so delightful a sight. And he was finally convinced that

the male Drossets were not quietly approaching through the dark. He went to Duissane and kissed her; she loosened the fastenings of his shirt. He slipped from his clothes and taking her to the couch would have proceeded, but she raised to her knees and held his head to her breast. He could hear her heart thumping; he felt sure her emotion was genuine. She whispered: "I have been cruel, but this is all past. Henceforth, I live only to exalt you, to make you the happiest of men, and you shall never regret it."

"You intend to live here with me on Rabendary?" inquired Glinnes, both cautious and puzzled.

"My father would kill me first," sighed Duissane. "You cannot imagine his hate . . . We must fly to a far world and there live as aristocrats. Perhaps we shall buy a space-yacht and wander among the colored stars.

Glinnes laughed. "All very well, but all this requires money."

"No problem there; we will use the thirty million ozols."

Glinnes somberly shook his head. "I am sure Akadie would object to this."

"How can Akadie deny us? My father and my brothers robbed him tonight. His case contained trash. He had the money today in the boat and he has been nowhere but here. He left the money here; did he not?" And Duissane peered into Glinnes face.

Glinnes smiled. "Akadie left a parcel in my bait-box, for a fact." And now he would wait no longer and drew her down to the couch.

They lay engaged, and Duissane, her face rapt, looked up at Glinnes. "You will take me from Trullion, and off and

away? I so want to live in wealth."

Glinnes kissed her nose. "Sh!" he whispered. "Be happy with what we have now and here . . ."

But she said, "Tell me, tell me that you'll do as I ask."

"I can't," said Glinnes. "All I can give you is myself and Rabendary."

Duissane's voice became anxious. "But what of the parcel in the bait-box?"

"That's trash too. Akadie has fooled us all. Or someone else swindled him before he left Welgen."

Duissane stiffened. "You mean that there is no money here?"

"So far as I know, not an ozol."

Duissane moaned, and the sound rose in her throat to become a wail of grief for her lost virginity. She tore herself free from the embrace and ran across the dim room, out on the dock. She opened the bait-box and pulling out the foil-wrapped package, tore it open. At the sight of the waste paper she cried out in agony. Glinnes watched from the doorway, rueful, grim and sad, but by no means bewildered. Duissane had loved him well enough, as well as she could. Heedless of nakedness she ran blindly down the dock and jumped into her boat, but missed her footing and toppled screaming into the water. A splash, and her voice became a gurgle.

Glinnes raced down the dock and jumped into her boat; her pale form floundered six feet beyond his reach. In the starlight he saw her terrified face; she could not swim. Ten feet behind her appeared the oily black dome of a merling head, with eye-disks glowing silver. Glinnes gave a hoarse call of desperation and reached for Duissane.

The merling wallowed close and seized her ankle. Glinnes jumped at its head, and managed to strike it between the eyes with his fist, which damaged his knuckles and perhaps surprised the merling. Duissane seized Glinnes in a frantic drowner's grip, and wrapped her legs around his neck; Glinnes swallowed water. He wrenched the girl loose and gaining the surface thrust her toward the boat. A merling's palp seized his ankle, and this was the nightmare which haunted every mind of Trullion: to be dragged alive down to the merlings' dinner table. Glinnes kicked like a maniac; his heel ground into the merling's maw. He twisted and broke loose. Duissane clung whimpering to the dock piling. Glinnes floundered to the ladder; he clambered into the boat and pulled her over the gunwhales and aboard. They lay limp and gasping like netted fish.

Something bumped the bottom of the boat: a disappointed merling. It might try to tip the boat in its hunger. Glinnes staggered to the dock and pulled Duissane up after him, and took her back along the starlit path to the house.

She stood withdrawn and miserable in the middle of the room while Glinnes poured two goblets of Olanche rum. Duissane drank apathetically, thinking her own dreary thoughts. Glinnes rubbed her dry with a towel, and himself as well, and then took her to the couch, where she began to cry. He stroked her and kissed her cheeks and forehead: gradually she became warm and relaxed. Cauch worked in her blood; the thought of dark still water thrilled her mind; she became responsive and again they embraced.

Early in the morning Duissane rose from the couch and without words donned her gown and her sandals. Glinnes watched: dispassionate and lethargic, as if seeing her through a telescope. When she drew the cape around her shoulders, he sat up. "Where are you going?"

Duissane threw him the briefest of side-glances; her expression stilled the words in his mouth. He rose from the couch, wrapped a paray around his waist. Duissane was already out the door. Glinnes followed her down the path and out upon the dock, trying to think of something to say which sounded neither hollow nor petulant.

Duissane stepped into her boat. She turned him a flat glance and then departed. Glinnes stood looking after her, his mind whirling and confined. Why did she act so? She had come to him; he had solicited nothing, offered nothing. . . He discerned his error. It was necessary, he told himself, to see the situation from the Trivanyi point of view. He had seared her extravagant Trevanyi pride. He had accepted from her something of immeasurable value; he had returned nothing, let alone that which she had hoped to receive. He was callous, shallow, unfeeling; he had made a fool of her.

There were further darker implications deriving from the Trevanyi world view. He was not just Glinnes Hulden, not just a lecherous Trill; he represented dark Fate, the hostile cosmic soul against which the Trevanyi felt themselves in heroic opposition. For the Trills, life flowed with mindless ease, that which was not here today would arrive tomorrow; in the mean-

time it was negligible. Life itself was pleasure. For the Trevanyi each event was a portent to be examined in all aspects and tested for consequences and aftermath. He shaped his universe piece by piece; any advantage or stroke of luck was a personal victory to be celebrated and gloated over; any misfortune or setback, no matter how slight, was a defeat and an insult to his self-esteem. Duissane had therefore suffered psychological disaster and by his instrumentality, even though, from the Trill point of view, he had only accepted what had been freely offered.

Heavy at heart Glinnes turned back to the house. His eye fell on the bait-box; a curious idea entered his mind. He raised the lid and looked within. There: the foil-wrapped parcel of waste-paper, which he took forth. He raked his fingers into the bottom layer of chaff and saw-dust, and encountered an object which proved to be a packet wrapped in transparent film. Glinnes saw pink and black Bank of Alastor certificates. Akadie had employed a sly trick to hide the money. Glinnes mused a moment, then took the foil-wrapped packet, discarded the waste-paper. He used the foil to wrap the money, which he replaced in the bait-box. Scarcely had he finished when he heard the sound of an approaching boat.

Down Farwan Water came Akadie's white boat, with two passengers: Akadie and Glay. The boat coasted up to the dock; Glinnes took the line and dropped the loop over the bollard.

Akadie and Glay jumped up on the dock. "Good morning," said Akadie in a voice of subdued cheer. He examined Glinnes with a clinical eye. "You are

pale."

"I slept poorly," said Glinnes, "what with worrying over your money."

"It is safe, I hope?" asked Akadie brightly.

"Duissane Drosset looked at it," said Glinnes ingenuously. "For some reason she let it lie."

"Duissane! How did she know it was there?"

"She asked where it was; I told her that you had left a packet in the bait-box. She claims that it contains only waste-paper."

Akadie laughed. "My little joke. I concealed the money rather cunningly, I do believe." Akadie went to the bait-box, removed the foil-wrapped package which he dropped to the dock and reached through the layer of chaff. His face froze. "The money is gone!"

"Imagine that!" said Glinnes. "It is hard to believe Duissane Drosset a thief."

Akadie scarcely heard him. In a voice strained with fear he cried, "Tell me, where is the money? Bandalio will not be kind; he'll send men to tear me apart. . . . Where, oh where? Did Duissane take the money?"

Glinnes could torment Akadie no further. He nudged the foil-wrapped packet with his toe. "What's this?"

Akadie swooped at the packet and tore it open; he looked up at Glinnes in gratitude and exasperation. "How wicked, to bait a man already on tenterhooks!"

Glinnes grinned. "What now will you do with the money?"

"As before, I wait for instructions."

Glinnes looked at Glay. "And what of you? Still a Fanscher, it seems."

"Naturally."

"What of your headquarters, or central institute, whatever you call it?"

"We have claimed a tract of open land, not too far from here, at the head of the Karbasche Valley."

"At the head of the Karbasche? Is that not the Vale of Xian?"

"The Vale of Xian is close at hand."

"A strange choice of location," said Glinnes.

"How strange?" retorted Glay. "The land is free and unoccupied."

"Except for the Trevanyi death-bird and uncounted Trevanyi souls."

"We will not disturb their occupancy, and I doubt if they will trouble ours. The land will be used in joint tenancy, so to speak."

"What then of my twelve thousand ozols, if your land is coming so cheap?"

"Never mind the twelve thousand ozols. We have sufficiently discussed the matter."

Akadie had already stepped into his boat. "Come along then, let us return to Rorquin before thieves appear on the river."

CHAPTER 17

GLINNES WATCHED the white boat until it disappeared. He examined the sky. Heavy clouds hung over the mountains and loomed against the sun. The water of Ambal Broad seemed heavy and listless. Ambal Isle was a charcoal sketch on mauve-grey board. Glinnes went up to the verandah, and eased himself into one of the old string chairs. The events of last night, so rich and dramatic, now seemed stuff built of dream-vapour. Glinnes took no

pleasure in the recollection. Duissane's motives, however ingenuous, had not been altogether false; he might have mocked her and sent her home in anger, but not in shame. How different everything seemed in the ashen light of day! . . . He jumped to his feet, annoyed at the uncomfortable trend of his thoughts. He would work. There was much to be done. He could pick musk-apples. He could go to the forest and gather pepperwort for drying. He could spade up the garden plot. He could repair the shed, which was about to collapse. The prospect of so much effort made him drowsy; he took himself inside to his couch and slept.

About midday he awoke to the sound of light rain on the roof. Glinnes drew a cloak over himself and lay pondering. Somewhere at the back of his mind hung a dark urgency: a matter requiring attention. Hussade practice? Lute Casagave? Akadie? Glay? Duissane? What about Duissane? She had come, she had gone, and would no longer wear a yellow flower in her hair. She might do so anyway, to hide the facts from Vang Drosset. On the other hand she might risk his fury and tell him all. More likely, she might present an altered version of her nocturnal adventures. The possibility, already recognized by his subconscious, now caused Glinnes overt uneasiness. He rose to his feet and went to the door. A silver drizzle obscured much of Ambal Broad, but so far as Glinnes could detect, no boats were abroad. The Trevanyi, nomads by nature, considered rain an unlucky portent; not even to wreak vengeance would a Trevanyi set forth in the rain.

Glinnes rummaged through the larder and found a dish of cold boiled mudworm, which he ate without appetite. The rain came to a sudden halt; sunlight spread across Ambal Broad. Glinnes went out on the verandah. All the world was fresh and wet, the colors clarified, the water glistening; the sky pure. Glinnes felt a lift of the spirits.

There was work to be done. He lowered himself into the string chair to consider the matter. A boat entered Ambal Broad from Ilfish Water. Glinnes jumped to his feet, tense and wary. But the boat was only one of Harrad's rental craft. The occupant, a young man in a semi-official uniform, had lost his way. He steered up to Rabendary dock and rose to stand on the seat. "Halloo there," he called to Glinnes. "I'm more than half-lost. I want Clinkhammer Broad, near Savpassaute Island."

"You're far south. Who are you looking for?"

The young man consulted a paper. "A certain Janno Akadie."

"Up Farwan Water into the Saur, take the second channel to the left, and continue all the way into Clinkhammer Broad. Akadie's manse stands on a jut."

"Very good; the route is clear in my mind. Aren't you Glinnes Hulden, the Tanchinaro?"

"I'm Glinnes Hulden, true enough."

"I saw you play the Elements. It wasn't much of a contest, as I recall."

"They're a young team, and reckless, but I'd consider them basically sound."

"Yes, that's my opinion as well. So then: good luck to the Tanchinaros, and thank you for your help."

The boat moved up Farwan Water past the silver and russet pomanders and out of sight, and Glinnes was left thinking about the Tanchinaros. They had not practiced since the game with the Kanchedos; they had no money; they had no sheirl. . . Glinnes thoughts veered to Duissane, who never again could be sheirl, and then to Vang Drosset, who might or might not be aware of the events of last night. Glinnes looked across Ambal Broad. No boats could be seen. He went to the telephone and called Akadie.

The screen glowed; Akadie's face was unwontedly peevish and his voice was fretful. "Gong, gong, gong is all I hear. The telephone is a dubious convenience. I'm expecting a distinguished visitor and I don't care to be annoyed."

"Indeed!" said Glinnes. "Is he a young man in a pale blue uniform and a messenger's cap?"

"Naturally not!" declared Akadie. His voice changed abruptly. "Why do you ask?"

"A few minutes ago such a man inquired the way to your house."

"I'll watch for him. Is that all you wanted?"

"I thought I might come by later today and borrow twenty thousand ozols."

"Puh! Where would I find twenty thousand ozols?"

"I know one place."

Akadie gave a sour chuckle. "You must borrow from someone more intent on suicide than myself." The screen went dead.

Glinnes ruminated a moment, but could contrive no further excuses for

idleness. He took crates out into the orchard and picked apples, working with the irritable energy of a Trill caught up in an activity which he considers a barely necessary evil. Twice he heard the gong of his telephone, but he ignored it, and thus knew nothing of a fateful event which had occurred earlier that day. He picked a dozen crates of apples, loaded them on a barrow which he trundled to a shed, then returned to the orchard to pick more and finish the job.

Afternoon waned; the dismal light of avness altered to the gunmetal, old rose and eggplant of evening. Stubbornly Glinnes worked on. A cold wind blew down from the mountains and struck through his shirt. Was more rain on the way? No. The stars already were showing; no rain tonight. He loaded the last of his apples on the barrow and started for the storage shed.

Glinnes halted. The door to the shed was half-ajar. Only half-ajar. Odd, when he purposely had left it open. Glinnes set down the barrow and returned into the orchard to think. He was not wholly surprised; in fact he had gone to the unusual precaution of carrying his gun in his pocket. From the corner of his eye he looked back toward the shed. There would be one within, one behind, and a third lurking at the corner of the house, or so he suspected. In the orchard he had been beyond the range of a thrown knife and in any event they would hardly want to kill him outright. First there would be words, then cutting and twisting and burning, to ensure that he derived no advantage from his offense. Glinnes licked his lips. His stomach felt hollow

and odd. . . What to do? He could not stand much longer in the twilight pretending to admire his apple crop.

He walked without haste around the side of the house, then, picking up a stave, he ran back and waited at the corner. Running footsteps, a mutter of rapid words. Around the corner bounded a dark shape; Glinnes swung the stick; the man threw up his arm and took the blow on his wrist; he uttered a yell of distress. Glinnes swung the stick again, the man caught the stick under his arm. Glinnes tugged, the two swung and reeled together, then someone else was on him: a man heavy, smelling of sweat, roaring in rage: Vang Drosset. Glinnes jumped back and fired his gun. He missed Vang Drosset, but struck Harving, the first man, who groaned and tottered away. A third dark shape loomed from nowhere and grappled Glinnes; the two struggled while Vang Drosset danced close, his throaty rageful roar never ceasing. Glinnes fired his gun, but could not aim and burnt the ground at Vang Drosset's feet; Vang Drosset leapt clumsily into the air. Glinnes kicked and stamped and broke the grip of Ashmor, but not before Vang Drosset had dealt him a blow to knock his head askew and daze him. In return Glinnes managed to kick Ashmor in the groin, to send him staggering against the wall of the house. Harving, on the ground, made a convulsive motion; a metallic flicker stung Glinnes shoulder. Glinnes fired his gun; Harving slumped and was limp.

"Merling food," gasped Glinnes. "Who else? You, Vang Drosset? You? Don't move; don't even stir, or I'll burn a hole through your gut."

Vang Drosset froze; Ashmor leaned against the side wall. "Walk ahead of me," said Glinnes. "Out on the dock." When Vang Drosset hesitated, Glinnes picked up the stave and struck him over the head. "I'll teach you to come murdering me, my fine Trevanyi bullies. You'll regret this night, I assure you. . . Move! Out upon the dock. Go ahead, run off if you dare." Glinnes plied the stave. "Move!"

The two Drossets lurched out on the dock, numbed by the failure of their mission. Glinnes beat them until they lay down, and beat them further until they seemed dazed; then he tied them with odd bits of cordage.

"So there you are, my fine lum-moxes. Now then, which of you killed my brother Shira? . . . Oh, you don't feel like talking? Well, I won't beat you further, though I well recall another time when you left me for the merlings. Now I must explain to you—Vang, do you hear me? Speak, Vang Drosset, answer me."

"I hear you well enough."

"Listen then. Did you kill my brother Shira?"

"What if I did? It was my right. He gave cauch to my young girl; it was my right to kill him. And my right to kill you."

"So Shira gave cauch to your daughter."

"That he did, the varmous* Trill horn."

"So now, what happens to you?"

Vang Drosset was silent a moment, then he blurted: "You can kill me or cut me apart, but that's the good it'll do

*Varmous: dirty, infamous, scurrilous; an adjective often applied to the Trills.

you."

"Here is my bargain," said Glinnes. "Write out a notification that you killed Shira—"

"I know no characters. I'll write you nothing."

"Then before witnesses you must declare that you killed Shira—"

"And then the prutanshyr? Aha!"

"Provide your own reasons; at this time I don't care. Assert that he struck you with a club or molested your daughter or called your wife a varmous old crow, no matter. Declare the af-fadavit and I'll let you go free, and you must swear by your father's soul to leave me in peace. Otherwise I'll roll both you and yonder murderous Ashmor into the mud and leave you for the merlings."

Vang Drosset moaned and strained at his bonds. His son raved: "Swear as you will; it won't include me! I'll kill him if it takes forever!"

"Hold your tongue," said Vang Drosset in a weary croak. "We are beaten; we must slink for our lives." To Glinnes: "Once more: what do you want?"

Glinnes restated his terms.

"And you won't prefer a legal charge? I tell you the great sweating horn thrust cauch at her and would have rolled her in the meadow yonder. . ."

"I'll prefer no legal charge."

The son sneered. "What about gelding or nose-cutting? Will you leave us our members?"

"I have no need for your filthy members," said Glinnes. "Keep them for yourself."

Vang Drosset gave a sudden furious

groan. "And what of my daughter whom you ravished, whom you fed cauch, whose value has now decreased? Will you pay the loss? Instead, you kill my son and utter threats against me."

"Your daughter made her own way here. I asked nothing of her. She brought cauch. She seduced me."

Vang Drosset chattered in rage. His son cried out a set of obscene threats. Vang Drosset at last became tired and commanded his son to silence. To Glinnes he said: "I agree to the bargain."

Glinnes freed the son. "Take your corpse and be off with you."

"Go," droned Vang Drosset.

Glinnes pulled his own boat close beside the dock and rolled Vang Drosset into the bilges. Then he went into the house and called Akadie, but could make no connection; Akadie had turned off his telephone. Glinnes returned to his boat and drove up Farwan Water at full speed, pale foam veering to either side.

"Where are you taking me?" groaned Vang Drosset.

"To see Akadie the mentor."

Vang Drosset groaned again, but made no comment.

The boat nosed up to the dock under Akadie's eccentric house; Glinnes cut Vang Drosset's legs loose and hoisted him up to the dock. Tripping and stumbling, they proceeded up the path. Lights blazed from the towers, to glare into Glinnes' face. Akadie's voice came sharp, from a loudspeaker. "Who arrives? Announce yourself, if you please."

"Glinnes Hulden and Vang Drosset, on the path!" bawled Glinnes.

"An unlikely pair of chums," sneered

the voice. "I believe I mentioned that I was occupied this evening?"

"I require your professional services!"

"Come forward then."

When they reached the house the door stood ajar with light streaming forth. Glinnes shoved Vang Drosset forward and into the house.

Akadie appeared. "And what business is this?"

"Vang Drosset has decided to clarify the matter of Shira's death," said Glinnes.

"Very well," said Akadie. "I have a guest, and I hope that you will be brief."

"The affair is important," Glinnes declared gruffly. "It must be conducted correctly."

Akadie merely motioned toward the study. Glinnes cut Vang Drosset's arms free and thrust him forward.

The study was dim and peaceful. A pink-orange fire of driftwood blazed in the fireplace. A man arose from one of the fireside chairs and performed a polite inclination of the head. Glinnes, his attention fixed on Vang Drosset, spared him only a glance and received an impression of medium stature, neutral garments, a face without notable or distinctive characteristics.

Akadie, perhaps recalling the events of the previous day, recovered something of his graciousness. He addressed his guest: "May I present Glinnes Hulden, my good neighbor, and also—" Akadie made an urbane gesture "—Vang Drosset, a member of that peregrine race the Trevanyi. Glinnes and Vang Drosset, I wish to present a man of wide intellectual scope and

considerable erudition, who interests himself in our small corner of the cluster. He is Ryle Shermatz. From the evidence of his jade locket, I believe his home world to be Belmath; am I correct in this?"

"As correct as needful," said Shermatz. "I am indeed familiar with Belmath. But otherwise you flatter me. I am a wandering journalist, no more. But please ignore me, and proceed with your business. If you require privacy I will remove myself."

"No reason why that should be necessary," said Glinnes. "Please resume your seat." He turned to Akadie. "Vang Drosset wishes to utter a sworn information before you, a legally accredited witness, which in effect will clarify the title of Rabendary and Ambal Isle." He nodded to Vang Drosset. "Proceed, if you will."

Vang Drosset licked his lips. "Shira Huldén, a dastardly horn, assaulted my daughter. He offered her cauch and attempted to force her. I came on the scene and in the protection of my property accidentally killed him. He is dead and there you have it." The last was a growl toward Glinnes.

Glinnes inquired of Akadie: "Does this constitute a valid proof of Shira's death?"

Akadie spoke to Vang Drosset: "Do you swear by your father's soul that you have spoken the truth?"

"Yes," grumbled Vang Drosset. "Mind you, it was self-defense."

"Very good," said Akadie. "The confession was freely made before a mentor and public counsellor and other witnesses. The confession holds legal weight."

"Be good enough, in this case, to telephone Lute Casagave and order him off my property."

Akadie pulled at his chin. "Do you propose to refund his money?"

"Let him collect from the man to whom he paid it: Glay Huldén."

Akadie shrugged. "I naturally must regard this as professional work, and I must charge you a fee."

"I expected nothing less."

Akadie went off to his telephone. Vang Drosset said in a surly voice: "Are you done? At my camp there'll be great grief tonight, and all due to the Huldéns."

"The grief is due to your own murderousness," said Glinnes. "Need I go into details? Never forget how you left me for dead in the mud."

Vang Drosset marched sullenly to the door where he turned and blurted: "No matter what; it's fair exchange for the shame you put on us, you and all the other Trills with your gluttony and lust. Horns all of you! Guts and groins, so much for the Trills. And you, Glinnes Huldén, stay out of my way; you won't have it so easy next time." He turned and stamped from the house.

Akadie, returning to the study, watched him go with nostrils fastidiously pinched. "You had best guard your boat," he told Glinnes. "Otherwise he'll drive away and leave you to swim."

Glinnes stood in the doorway and watched Vang Drosset's burly form recede along the road. "He carries grief too heavy for the boat, or any other mischief; he'll find his way home by Verleth Bridge. What of Lute Casagave?"

"He refuses to answer his telephone," said Akadie. "You must postpone your triumph."

"Then you must postpone your fee," said Glinnes. "Did the messenger find his way here?"

"Yes indeed," said Akadie. "I can justly say that he carried away a great load of my responsibilities. I am gratified to be done with the business."

"In that case, perhaps you have a cup of tea to offer me? Or is your business with Ryl Shermatz absolutely private?"

"You may have tea," said Akadie ungraciously. "The conversation is general. Ryl Shermatz is interested in the Fanscherade. He wonders how a world so generous and easy could breed so austere a sect."

"I suppose we must consider Junius Farfan as a catalyst," remarked Shermatz. "Or perhaps, for better comparison, let us think in terms of a super-saturated solution. It seems placid and stable, but a single microscopic crystal produces disequilibrium."

"A striking image!" declared Akadie. "Allow me to pour out a drop of something more energetic than tea."

"Why not indeed?" Shermatz stretched out his legs to the fire. "You have a most comfortable home."

"Yes, it is pleasant." Akadie went to fetch a bottle.

Glinnes asked Shermatz: "I hope that you find Trullion entertaining?"

"I do indeed. Each world of the cluster projects a mood of its own, and the sensitive traveler quickly learns to identify and savor this individuality. Trullion, for instance, is calm and gentle; its waters reflect the stars. The

light is mild; the landscapes and water-capes are entrancing."

"This gentle aspect is what strikes the eye," agreed Akadie, "but sometimes I wonder as to its reality. For instance, under these placid waters swim merlings, creatures as unpleasant as any, and these calm Trill faces conceal terrible forces."

"Come now," said Glinnes. "You exaggerate."

"By no means! Have you ever heard a hussade crowd cry out to spare the conquered sheirl? Never! She must be denuded to the music of—of what? The emotion has no name, but it is as rich as blood."

"Bah," said Glinnes. "Hussade is played everywhere."

Akadie ignored him. "Then there is the prutanshyr. Amazing to watch the rapt faces, as some wretched criminal demonstrates how dreadful the process of dying can be."

"The prutanshyr may serve a useful purpose," said Shermatz. "The effects of such affairs are difficult to judge."

"Not from the standpoint of the miscreant," said Akadie. "Is this not a bitter way to die, to look out upon the fascinated throng, to know that your spasms are providing a repast of entertainment?"

"It is not a private or sedate occasion," said Shermatz with a sad smile. "Still, the folk of Trullion seem to consider the prutanshyr a necessary institution, and so it persists."

"It is a disgrace, to Trullion and to Alastor Cluster," said Akadie coldly. "The Connatic should ban all such barbarity."

Shermatz rubbed his chin. "There is

something in what you say. Still, the Connatic hesitates to interfere with local customs."

"A double-edged virtue! We rely upon him for wise decisions. Whether or not you love the Fanschers, at least they despise the prutanshyr and would obliterate the institution. If they ever come to power they will do so."

"No doubt they would expunge hussade as well," said Glinnes.

"By no means," said Akadie. "The Fanschers are indifferent to the game; it has no meaning for them, one way or the other."

"What a grim fastidious lot!" said Glinnes.

"They seem even more so by contrast with their varmous parents," said Akadie.

"No doubt true," said Ryl Shermatz. "Still, one must note that an extreme philosophy often provokes its anti-thesis."

"That is the case here on Trullion," said Akadie. "I warned you that the idyllic atmosphere is delusive."

A glare of light flooded the study, persisting only a moment. Akadie uttered an ejaculation and went to the window, followed by Glinnes. They saw a great white cruiser coming slowly across Clinkhammer Broad; the mast-head searchlight playing along the shore, briefly touching Akadie's manse, had illuminated the study.

Akadie said in a wondering voice, "I believe it's the *Scopoeia*, Lord Rianle's yacht. Why should it be here in Clinkhammer Broad, of all places?"

A boat left the yacht and made for Akadie's dock; simultaneously the horn sounded three preemptory blasts.

Akadie muttered under his breath and ran from the house. Ryl Shermatz wandered here and there about the room inspecting Akadie's clutter of mementos, bric-a-brac, curios. A cabinet displayed Akadie's collection of small busts, each one or another of the personages who had shaped the history of Alastor: scholars, scientists, warriors, philosophers, poets, musicians, and on the bottom shelf, a formidable array of anti-heroes. "Interesting," said Ryl Shermatz. "our history has been rich, and the histories before ours as well."

Glinnes pointed out a particular bust. "There you see Akadie himself, who fancies himself one with the immortals."

Shermatz chuckled. "Since Akadie has assembled the group he must be allowed the right to include whom he pleases."

Glinnes went to the window in time to see the boat returning to the yacht. A moment later, Akadie entered the room, face ash-gray and hair hanging in lank strings.

"What's wrong with you?" demanded Glinnes. "You look a ghost."

"That was Lord Rianle," croaked Akadie. "The father of Lord Erzan-Rianle, who was kidnapped. He wants his hundred thousand ozols back."

Glinnes stared in amazement. "Will he leave his son to rot?"

Akadie went to the alcove where he kept his telephone and switched the set back into operation. Turning back to Shermatz and Glinnes he said: "The Whelm raided Bandalio's haven. They captured Bandalio, all his men and ships; they liberated the captives. Bandalio took at Welgen, and many

more besides."

"Excellent news!" said Glinnes. "So why walk around like a dead man?"

"This afternoon I sent away the money. The thirty million ozols are gone."

CHAPTER 18

GLINNES LED Akadie to a chair. "Sit down, drink this wine." He turned a glance toward Ryl Shermatz, who stood looking into the fire. "Tell me: how did you send the money off?"

"By the messenger you directed here. He carried the correct symbol; I gave him the parcel; he went away and that is all there is to it."

"You don't know the messenger?"

"I have never seen him before." Akadie's wits seemed to snap back in place. He glared at Glinnes. "You seem very concerned!"

"Should I be uninterested in thirty million ozols?"

"How is it that you did not hear the news? It's been current since noon! Everyone has been trying to telephone me."

"I was working in my orchard. I paid no heed to the telephone."

"The money belongs to the people who paid the ransom," declared Akadie in a stern voice.

"Indisputably. But whoever retrieves it might legitimately claim a good fee."

"Bah," muttered Akadie. "Have you no shame?"

The gong sounded. Akadie gave a nervous start and stumbled to the telephone. After a moment he returned. "Lord Gygas also wants his hundred thousand ozols. He won't believe that I

sent off the money. He became insistent, even somewhat insulting."

The gong sounded again. "You are in for a busy evening," said Glinnes, rising to his feet.

"Are you going?" asked Akadie in a pitiful voice.

"Yes. If I were you I'd turn the telephone off again." He bowed to Ryl Shermatz. "A pleasure to have met you."

Glinnes drove his boat at full speed east across Clinkhammer Broad, under the Verleth Bridge, down Mellish Water. Ahead shone a dozen dim lights: Saurkash. Glinnes drifted into the dock, moored his boat and jumped ashore. Saurkash was quiet except for a few muffled voices and a laugh or two from the nearby Magic Tench. Glinnes walked along the dock to Harrad's boat agency. An overhead light shone down on the rental boats. He went to the shop and looked in through the door. Young Harrad was nowhere to be seen, though a light glowed in the office. One of the men at the tavern rose to his feet and ambled down to the dock: young Harrad. "Yes, sir, what might you be wanting? If it's boat repair, nothing till tomorrow. . . . Ah, Squire Hulden, I didn't recognize you under the light."

"No matter," said Glinnes. "Today I saw a young man in one of your boats, a hussade player I'm anxious to locate. Do you recall his name?"

"Today? About mid-afternoon, or a trifle earlier?"

"That would be about the time."

"I've got it written down inside. A hussade player, you say. He didn't look the type. Still you never know. What's next for the Tanchinaros?"

"We'll be back in action soon. Whenever we can collect ten thousand ozols for a treasury. The weak teams won't play us."

"For good reason! Well, let's look at the register. . . This might well be his name." Young Harrad turned the ledger first one way then the other. "Schill Sodergang, or so I make it out. No address."

"No address? And you don't know where he can be found?"

"Perhaps I should be more careful," young Harrad apologized. "I've never yet lost a boat, except when Old Zax went blind on soursap."

"Did Sodergang have anything to say to you? Anything whatever?"

"Nothing much, except to ask the way to Akadie's house."

"And when he came back—what then?"

"He asked what time the Port Maheul boat came past. He had to wait an hour."

"He had a black case with him?"

"Why yes, so he did."

"Did he talk to anyone?"

"He just sat dozing on the bench yonder."

"It's no great matter," said Glinnes. "I'll see him another time."

GLINNES DROVE PELL-MELL down the dark waterways, past the groves of silent trees: black stencils fringed with star-silver. At midnight he arrived in Welgen. He slept at a dockside inn and early in the morning boarded the east-bound ferry.

Port Maheul, named for its busy space-field rather than its site on the shores of the South Ocean, was the

largest town of Jolany Prefecture and perhaps the oldest city of Trullion. The principle structures were built to archaic standards of solidity with glazed russet brick, timbers of ageless black salpoon and steep roofs sheathed with blue glass shingles. The square was reckoned as picturesque as any in Merland, with its perimeter of ancient buildings, black sulpicella trees and herringbone pavement of russet-brown bricks and cobbles of mountain hornblende. At the center stood the prutanshyr, with its glass cauldron, through the sides of which a criminal being boiled and the rapt crowd might inspect each other. Off the square sprawled an untidy market, then a clutter of ramshackle little houses, then the gaunt glass and iron space depot. The field extended east to the Genglin Marshes, where, so it was said, the merlings crept up through the mud and reeds to marvel at the space-ships coming and going.

Glinnes spent a toilsome three days in Port Maheul, searching for Schill Sodergang. The steward of the ferry which plied between the Fens and Port Maheul vaguely remembered Sodergang as a passenger, but could recall nothing else, not even Sodergang's point of debarkation. The town roster listed no Sodergangs, nor was the name known to the constabulary.

Glinnes visited the space-port. A ship of the Andrujukha Line had departed Port Maheul on the day following Sodergang's visit to the Fens, but the name Sodergang failed to appear on the manifest.

On the afternoon of the third day Glinnes returned to Welgen and then by

his own boat to Saurkash. Here he encountered Young Harrad whom he found bursting with sensational information, and Glinnes had to delay his own questions to listen to Young Harrad's gossip—which was absorbing enough in itself. It seemed that an act of boldest villainy had been effected almost under Young Harrad's nose, so to speak. Akadie, whom Young Harrad never had wholly trusted, was the cool culprit who had decided to seize opportunity by the forelock and sequester to himself thirty million ozols.

Glinnes gave an incredulous laugh. "Sheer absurdity!"

"Absurdity?" Young Harrad looked to see if Glinnes were serious. "The lords all hold this opinion; can so many be wrong? They refuse to believe that Akadie closed off his telephone on the precise day that news of Bandalio's capture arrived."

Glinnes snorted in disparagement. "I did exactly the same thing. Am I a criminal on that account?"

Young Harrad shrugged. "Someone is thirty million ozols the richer. Who? The proof is not yet explicit, but Akadie has helped himself not at all by his actions."

"Come now! What else has he done?" "He has joined Fanscherade! He's now a Fanscher. It's the common belief that they took him in because of the money."

Glinnes clutched his spinning head. "Akadie a Fanscher? I can't believe it. He's too clever to join a group of freaks!"

Young Harrad stuck to his guns. "Why did he depart in the dark of the night and travel up to the Vale of Green

Ghosts? And remember, for ever so long he has worn Fanscher clothes and aped the Fanscher style."

"Akadie is merely somewhat silly. He enjoys a fad."

Young Harrad sniffed. "He can enjoy what he likes now, that's certain. In a way, I respect such audacity, but when thirty million ozols are at stake a switched-off telephone sounds pretty thin."

"What else could he say except the truth? I saw the switched-off telephone myself."

"Well, I'm sure the truth will be made clear. Did you ever find that hussade player, Jorcom, Jarcom, whatever his name?"

"Jorcom? Jarcom?" Glinnes stared in wonder. "Sodergang, you mean?"

Young Harrad grinned sheepishly. "That was somebody else, a fisherman down Isley Broad. I wrote the name in the wrong place."

Glinnes controlled his voice with an effort. "The man's name is Jorcom, then? Or Jarcom?"

"Let's take a look," said young Harrad. He brought out his register. "Here's Sodergang, and here is the other name; it looks like Jarcom to me. He wrote it himself."

"It looks like Jarcom," said Glinnes. "Or is it Jarcony?"

"Jarcony! You're right! That's the name he used. What position does he play?"

"Position? Rover. I'll have to look him up sometime. Except that I don't know where he lives." He looked at young Harrad's clock. If he drove at break-neck speed back to Welgen he could just barely connect with the Port

Maheul ferry. He made a gesticulation of fury and frustration, then jumped in his boat and hurtled back east toward Welgen.

IN PORT MAHEUL Glinnes found the name 'Jarcony' as unknown as 'Sodergang'. Tired and bored beyond caring he took himself to the arbor in front of the Stranger's Rest and ordered a flask of wine. Someone had discarded a journal; Glinnes picked it up and scanned the page. His eye was caught by an article:

AN ILL-FATED HOSTILITY
AGAINST THE FANSCHERS

Yesterday news reached Port Maheul of an improper act committed by a Trevanyi gang against the Fanscher camp in the Vale of Green Ghosts, or, as the Trevanyi know it, the Vale of Xian. The Trevanyi motives are in doubt. It is known that they resent the Fanscher presence in their sacred vale. But also it will be remembered that the mentor Janno Akadie, for many years resident in the Saurkash region, has declared himself a Fanscher and now resides at the Fanscher camp. Speculation links Akadie with a sum of thirty million ozols, which Akadie claims to have paid to the starmenter Sagmondo Bandolio, but which Bandolio denies having received. It is possible that the leader of the Trevanyi gang, a certain Vang Drosset, apparently decided that Akadie had taken the money with him into the Vale of Green Ghosts, and so organized the raid. The

facts are these: seven Trevanyi entered Akadie's tent during the night, but failed to stifle his outcries. A number of Fanschers responded to the call and in the ensuing fight two Trevanyi were killed and several others wounded. Those who escaped took refuge at a Trevanyi conclave nearby where sacred rites are in progress. Needless to say, the Trevanyi failed to possess themselves of the thirty million ozols, which evidently has been hidden securely. The Fanschers are outraged by the attack, which they deem an act of persecution.

"We fought like karpouns," declared a Fanscher spokesman. "We attack no one, but will fiercely protect our rights.

"The future is for Fanscherade! We summon the youth of Merland, and all those opposed to the varmous old life-ways: join Fanscherade! Lend us your strength and comradenship!"

Chief Constable Filidice declares himself perturbed by the circumstance and has launched an investigation. "No further disruptions of the public peace will be tolerated," he stated.

Glinnes threw the journal across the table. Slumping into his chair he poured half a goblet of wine down his throat. The world he knew and loved seemed in fragments. Fanschers and Fanscherade! Lute Casagave, Lord Ambal! Jorcom, Jarcom, Jarcony, Sodergang! He despised each of the names!

He finished the wine, then went down

to the dock to wait for the boat back to Welgen.

CHAPTER 19

RABENDARY ISLAND seemed unnaturally still and lonesome. An hour after Glinnes' return the gong sounded; he discovered his mother's face on the telephone screen.

"I thought you'd gone to join the Fanschers," said Glinnes in a voice of hollow jocularity.

"No, no, not I." Marucha's voice was fretful and worried. "Janno went to avoid the confusion. You can't conceive the browbeating, the bluster, the accusations which have come our way! We had no respite and poor Janno finally felt obliged to leave."

"So he isn't a Fanscher after all."

"Of course not! You've always been such a literal-minded child! Can't you understand how a person might be interested in an idea without becoming its staunchest advocate?"

Glinnes accepted the deficiencies imputed to him. "How long will Akadie stay in the Vale?"

"I feel that he should return at once. How can he live a normal life? It's quite literally dangerous! Did you hear how the Trevanyi set upon him?"

"I heard that they tried to rob him of his money."

Marucha's voice raised in pitch. "You shouldn't say such a thing, even as a joke! Poor Janno! What he hasn't gone through! And he's always been such a good friend to you."

"I've done nothing against him."

"Now you must do something for him. I want you to go to the Vale and

bring him home."

"What? I see no point in such an expedition. If he wants to come home, he'll do so."

"That's not true! You can't imagine his mood; he is limp with passivity! I've never seen him so before!"

"Perhaps he's just resting—taking a vacation, so to speak."

"A vacation? With his life in danger? It's common knowledge that the Trevanyi plan a massacre."

"Hmhf. I hardly think that this is the case."

"Very well. If you won't help me, then I must go myself."

"Go where? Do what?"

"Go to the Fanscher camp and insist that Janno return home."

"Confound it. Very well. Suppose he won't come?"

"You must do your best."

GLINNES RODE the air-bus to the mountain town Circanie, then hired an ancient surface-car to convey him to the Vale of Xian. A garrulous old man with a blue scarf tied around his head was included in the rental price; he manipulated the antique device as if he were directing a recalcitrant animal. The car at times scraped the ground; at other times it bounded thirty feet into the air, providing Glinnes with startling perspectives over the countryside. Two energy-guns on the seat beside the driver attracted his attention and he inquired as to their purpose.

"Dangerous territory," said the driver. "Whoever thought we'd see such a day?"

Glinnes considered the landscape, which seemed as placid as Rabendary

Island. Mountain pomanders stood here and there: clouds of pink mist clutched in silver fingers. Blue-green fials marched along the ridge. Whenever the car rose into the air the horizons widened; the land to the south fell away in receding striations of pallid colors. Glinnes said, "I see no great cause for alarm."

"So long as you're not a Fanscher, your chances are tolerable," said the driver. "Not good, mind you, because the Trevanyi conclave is only a mile or two yonder, and they are as suspicious as wasps. They drink *racq* which influences the nerves and makes them none the kindlier."

The valley grew narrow; the mountains rose steep to either hand. A quiet river flowed along the flat floor; on each side stood groves of sombarilla, pomander, deodar.

Glinnes asked, "Is this the Vale of Green Ghosts?"

"Some call it so. The Trevanyi bury lesser dead among the trees. The true and sacred Vale lies ahead, beyond the Fanschers. There, you can see the Fanscher camp. They are an industrious group, no question as to that. . . I wonder what they are trying to do? Do they know themselves?"

The car slid into the camp; a scene of confusion. Hundreds of tents had been erected along the river bank; on the meadow buildings of concrete foam were under construction.

Glinnes found Akadie without difficulty. He sat at a desk in the shade of a glyptus tree performing clerical work. He greeted Glinnes with neither surprise nor affability.

"I am here to bring you to your

senses," said Glinnes. "Marucha wants you back at Rorquin's Tooth."

"I will return when the mood strikes me," said Akadie in a measured voice. "Until you arrived life was peaceful. . . Though for a fact my wisdom has been in no great demand. I expected to be greeted as a noble sage; instead I sit here doing footling sums." He made a deprecatory gesture at his desk. "I was told that I must earn my keep and this is a job no one cares to undertake." He cast a sour glance toward a nearby cluster of tents. "Everyone wants to participate in the grandiose schemes. Directives and announcements flow like chaff."

"I should think," said Glinnes, "that with thirty million ozols you could easily pay your way."

Akadie gave him a glance of weary reproach. "Do you realize that this episode has blasted my life? My integrity has been questioned and I can never again serve as mentor."

"You have ample wealth even without the thirty million," said Glinnes. "What shall I tell my mother?"

"Say that I am bored and overworked, but at least the accusations have not followed me here. Do you plan to see Glay?"

"No. What are all these concrete structures?"

"I have made it my business to know nothing," said Akadie.

"Have you seen the ghosts?"

"No, but on the other hand I have not looked for them. You'll find Trevanyi graves across the river, but the sacred home of the death-bird is a mile up the valley, beyond that copse of deodars. I made a casual exploration

and was exalted. An enchanting place, beyond all question: too good for the Trevanyi."

"How is the food?" asked Glinnes ingenuously.

Akadie made a sour grimace. "The Fanschers intend to learn the secrets of the universe, but now they cannot so much as toast bread properly. Each meal is the same: gruel and a salad of coarse greens. There is not a flask of wine for miles. . . ." Akadie spoke on for several minutes. He remarked upon Fanscher dedication and Fanscher innocence, but mostly of Fanscher austerity, which he found inexcusable. He trembled with rage at the mention of the thirty million ozols, yet he showed a pathetic anxiety for reassurance. "You yourself saw the messenger; you directed him to my house. Does the fact carry no weight?"

"No one has required my evidence. What of your friend Ryl Shermatz? Where was he?"

"He saw nothing of the transaction. A strange man, that Shermatz! His soul is quick-silver."

Glinnes rose to his feet. "Come along then. You achieve nothing here. If you dislike notoriety, stay quietly at Rabendary for a week or so."

Akadie pulled at his chin. "Well, then, why not?" He gave the papers a contemptuous flick. "What do the Fanschers know of style, urbanity, discernment? They have me doing sums." He rose to his feet. "I will leave this place; Fanscherade grows tiresome; these folk will never conquer the universe after all."

"Come along then," said Glinnes. "Have you anything to bring? Thirty

million ozols, for instance?"

"The joke has lost its savor," said Akadie. "I will go as I am, and to lend flair to my departure, I will perform an unfamiliar equation." He scrawled a few flamboyant flourishes on the paper, then slung his cloak over his shoulder. "I am ready."

THE GROUND-CAR slid down the Vale of Green Ghosts and toward avness arrived at Circanie; Akadie and Glinnes put up for the night at a little country inn.

At midnight Glinnes awoke to hear excited voices, and a few minutes later detected the sound of running footsteps. He looked out the window, but the street lay quiet in the starlight. Drunken revelry, thought Glinnes, and returned to his couch.

In the morning they heard the news, which explained the occasion. During the night the Trevanyi had waxed passionate at their conclave; they had walked through fires; they had performed their bounding mood-dances; their 'Grotesques', as they called their seers, had breathed the smoke of baicha roots and had belched forth the destiny of the Trevanyi race. The warriors responded with mad screams and ululation; running and leaping over the starlit hills they had attacked the Fanscher camp.

The Fanschers were by no means unprepared. They employed their energy guns with dire effect; the bounding Trevanyi became startled statues limned in blue sparks. Action became confused; the first zestful onslaught became a mournful writhing of bodies up and down the Vale, and

presently there was no more fighting; the Trevanyi were either dead or had fled in a horror as full and wild as their attack. The Fanschers watched them go in dismal silence. They had won but they had lost. Fanscherade would never be the same; its verve and vivacity was gone, and in the morning there would be dreary work to do.

Akadie and Glinnes returned to Rabendary without incident, but Glinnes' slipshod housekeeping made Akadie irritable and before the day was out he decided to return to Rorquin's Tooth.

Glinnes telephoned Marucha who had undergone a change of mood; now she fretted at the prospect of Akadie's return. "There has been such turmoil and all unnecessary; my head is splitting. Lord Gensifer demands that Janno make instant contact with him. He is most persistent and not at all sympathetic."

Akadie's pent emotions burst forth in outrage. "Does he dare to hector me? I'll set him straight and quickly too. Get him on the telephone!"

Glinnes made the connection. Lord Gensifer's face appeared on the screen. "I understand that you wish a word or two with Janno Akadie," said Glinnes.

"Quite true," stated Lord Gensifer. "Where is he?"

Akadie stepped forward. "I am here, and why not? I recall no pressing business with you; still you have been incessantly telephoning my house."

"Come then," said Lord Gensifer, thrusting forth his lower lip. "There is still a matter of thirty million ozols to be discussed."

"Why should I discuss them with

you, in any event?" demanded Akadie. "You have nothing at stake. You were not kidnaped; you paid no ransom."

"I am secretary to the Council of Lords, and I am empowered to look into the matter."

"I still do not take kindly to your tone of voice," said Akadie. "My position has been made clear. I will discuss the matter no further."

Lord Gensifer was silent a moment. "You may have no choice," he said at last.

"I really don't understand you," replied Akadie in an icy voice.

"The situation is quite simple. The Whelm is delivering Sagmondo Bandolio to Chief Constable Filidice in Welgen. Undoubtedly he will be forced to identify his accomplices."

"This means nothing to me. He can identify as he will."

Lord Gensifer cocked his head to the side. "Someone with intimate local knowledge furnished information Bandolio. This person will share Bandolio's fate."

"Deservedly so."

"Let me say only that if you remember any helpful information, no matter how trifling, you may communicate with me at any hour of the day or night—excepting of course this day week," Lord Gensifer chuckled benignly, "which is when I espouse to myself Lady Gensifer."

Akadie's professional interest was stirred. "Who is to be the new Lady Gensifer?"

Lord Gensifer half-closed his eyes in beatific reflection. "She is gracious, beautiful and virtuous beyond compare, far too fine for a person like

myself. I refer to the former Tanchinaro sheirl Duissane Drosset: Her father was killed in the recent battle and she has turned to me for comfort.

Akadie said dryly, "The day has then brought us at least one delightful surprise."

The screen dimmed on Lord Gensifer's countenance.

IN THE VALE a strange quiet prevailed. Never had the fabled landscape seemed so beautiful. The weather was exceptionally clear; the air, a crystal lens, intensified, deepened the colors. Sounds were clarified but somehow muted, or perhaps the folk in the Vale spoke in somber voices and avoided sudden sounds. At night the lights were few and dim, and conversations were murmurs in the dark. The Trevanyi raid had corroborated what many had suspected: that Fanscherade, if it were to succeed, must defeat a broad array of negative forces. Now was a time for resolution and a hardening of the spirit! A few persons abruptly left the Vale and were seen no more.

At the Trevanyi conclave fury had broadened and deepened. If any voices urged moderation, they no longer could be heard for the strident music of drums, horns and that coiled full-throated instrument known as the *narwoun*. At night the men leapt through fires and cut themselves with knives to yield blood for their rites. Clans from far Bassway and the Eastlands arrived, and many carried energy-guns. Kegs of an ardent distillation known as *racq* were broached and consumed, and the warriors sang great oaths to the skirling music of *narwoun*, drums and oboes.

On the third morning after the night raid a squad of constables appeared at the conclave, including Chief Constable Filidice. He advised the Trevanyi to reasonable conduct, and announced his resolve to maintain order.

Trevanyi voices cried out in protest. The Fanschers encroached upon sacred soil, the Vale where ghosts walked!

Chief Constable Filidice raised his voice. "You have cause for concern. I intend to represent your case to the Fanschers. Nonetheless, whatever the outcome, you must abide by my decision. Do you agree?"

The Trevanyi remained silent.

Chief Constable Filidice repeated his demand for cooperation and again received no commitment. "If you refuse to accede to my judgment," he said, "obedience will be forced upon you. So be warned!"

The constables returned to their aircraft and flew over the hill into the Vale of Green Ghosts.

Junius Farfan conferred with Chief Constable Filidice. Farfan had lost weight; the garments hung loosely about his figure, and harsh lines marked his face. He listened to the Chief Constable in silence. His response was cold. "We have worked here for several months, without inconvenience to anyone. We respect the Trevanyi graves; there has been no irreverence; they are never denied freedom of passage into their Vale of Xian. The Trevanyi are irrational; we respectfully must refuse to leave our land."

Chief Constable Filidice, a bulky pallid man with ice-blue eyes and ponderous with the majesty of his office,

had never taken kindly to recalcitrance. "Just so," he said. "I have enjoined restraint upon the Trevanyi; I now do the same to you."

Junius Farfan bowed his head. "We will never attack the Trevanyi. But we are ready to defend ourselves."

Chief Constable Filidice uttered a sarcastic snort. "The Trevanyi are warriors, every man of them. They would cut your throats with a flourish, should we allow them to do so. I strongly advise you to make other arrangements. Why need you build your headquarters in such a place?"

"The land was free and open. Will you provide us land elsewhere?"

"Naturally not. In fact, I see no reason why you need a great headquarters in the first place. Why not simply retire to your homes and avoid all this contention?"

Junius Farfan smiled. "I perceive your ideological bias."

"It is not bias to favor the tried and true ways of the past; it is ordinary common sense."

Junius Farfan shrugged and attempted no refutation of an irrefutable point of view: The constables established a patrol across the ridge.

The day passed. Avness brought a lightning storm. For an hour lavender strands of fire stroked the dark flanks of the hills. Fanschers came forth to marvel at the spectacle; Trevanyi shuddered at the portent; in their world-view Urmank the Ghost-Killer stood on the clouds, spitting the souls of Trevanyi and Trill alike. Nonetheless they arrayed themselves, drank *racq*, exchanged embraces and at midnight set forth upon their mission, in order that

they might attack during the gray hour before dawn. They deployed under the deodars and along the ridges, avoiding the constables and their detection apparatus. In spite of their stealth they encountered a Fanscher ambush. Shouts and screams ruptured the pre-dawn silence. Energy-guns flashed; struggling shapes created grotesque silhouettes against the sky. The Trevanyi fought with hissing curses, guttural cries of pain; the Fanschers strove in dire silence. The constabulary blew horns; waving the black and gray flag of government authority they advanced upon the conflict. The Trevanyi, suddenly aware that they confronted an insensate foe, gave ground; the Fanschers pursued like Fates. The constables blew their horns and issued orders; they were handled roughly; the black and gray flag was torn from their grasp. The constables radioed Circanie; Chief Constable Filidice, aroused from his sleep and already out of sorts with Fanscherade, ordered out the militia.

Halfway into morning the militia arrived in the Vale: a company of Trill country-folk. They despised Trevanyi, but knew them and accepted their existence. The freakish Fanschers were outside their experience, and hence alien. The Trevanyi, recovered from their panic, followed the militia into the valley with musicians loping along at the flank playing screeches and war-whoops.

The Fanschers had retreated to the shelter of the deodar forest; only Junius Farfan and a few others awaited the militia. They no longer hoped for victory; the power of the state was now ranged against them. The captain of the militia

came forward and issued orders: the Fanschers must leave the Vale.

"On what grounds?" asked Farfan.

"Your presence provokes a disturbance."

"Our presence is legal."

"Nevertheless, it creates a tension which previously did not exist. Legality must encompass practicality, and your continued occupation of the Vale of Green Ghosts is impractical. I must insist that you depart."

Junius Farfan consulted with his comrades; then, tears streaming down his cheeks for the destruction of this dream, he turned away to instruct those Fanschers who watched from the shade of the deodars. Addled by *racq*, the Trevanyi could not contain themselves; they sprang at the hated Farfan; a thrown knife struck squarely into the back of Farfan's neck. The Fanschers raised a weird moan. Eyes wide in horror they fell upon militia and Trevanyi alike. The militia, uninterested in the quarrel, broke ranks and fled; Trevanyi and Fanschers tumbled about on the ground each eager to destroy the other.

Eventually, through some mysterious process of mutual accord the survivors crawled apart. The Trevanyi returned over the hills to the keening conclave. The Fanschers paused only a few moments in their camp, then wandered off down the valley. Fanscherade was finished. The great adventure was done.

MONTHS LATER the Connatic, in conversation with one of his ministers, mentioned the battle in the Vale of Green Ghosts. "I was in the neighborhood, and was kept apprised of events. It was a tragic set of circumstances."

"Could you not have halted the confrontation?"

The Connatic shrugged. "I might have brought down the Whelm. I tried this in a case not dissimilar—the affair of the Tamarcho on Rhamnotis—and there was no resolution. A troubled society is like a man with a stomach-ache. When he purges himself, he improves."

"Still—many folk must pay with their lives."

The Connatic made a wry gesture. "I enjoy the comradeship of the public house, the country inn, the dockside tavern. I travel the worlds of Alastor and everywhere I find people whom I find subtle and fascinating, people whom I love. Each individual of the five trillion is a cosmos in himself; each is irreplaceable, unique. . . Sometimes I find a man or a woman to hate. I look into their faces and I see malice, cruelty, corruption. Then I think, these folk are equally useful in the total scheme of things; they act as exemplars against which virtue can measure itself. Life without contrast is food without salt. . . As Connatic I must think in terms of policy; then I see only the aggregate man, whose face is a blur of five trillion faces. Toward this man I feel no emotion. So it was in the Vale of Green Ghosts. Fanscherade was doomed from its inception; was ever a man so fey as Junius Farfan? There are survivors, but there are no more Fanschers. Some will doff their uniforms and once more become Trills. Some will move on to other worlds. A few may become starmeters. A stubborn few may persist as Fanschers in their personal lives. And all who participated will remember the great dream and will feel

men apart from those who did not share the glory and the tragedy."

CHAPTER 20

TO RABENDARY ISLAND came Gray, his clothes stained and rent, his arm in a sling. "I have to live somewhere," he said glumly. "It might as well be here."

"It's as good as any," said Glinnes. "I suppose you didn't bother to bring along the money."

"Money? What money?"

"The twelve thousand ozols."

"No."

"A pity. Casagave now calls himself Lord Ambal."

Gray was uninterested. He had no emotions left; his world was gray and flat. "Suppose he were Lord Ambal; does that give him the isle?"

"He seems to think so."

The gong summoned Glinnes to the telephone. The screen displayed Akadie's face. "Ah, Glinnes! I'm happy to have found you at home. I need your assistance. Can you come at once to Rorquin's Tooth?"

"Certainly, if you'll pay my usual fee."

Akadie made a petulant gesture. "I have no time for facetiousness. Can you come at once?"

"Very well. What is your difficulty?"

"I'll explain when you arrive."

AKADIE MET Glinnes at the door and led him almost at a trot into the study. "I wish to introduce two officials of the prefecture misguided enough to suspect my poor tired person of wrong-doing. On the right is our esteemed Chief Constable Benko Filidice; on the left is In-

spector Lucian Daul, investigator, jailer and sergeant of the prutanshyr. This, gentlemen, is my friend and neighbor Glinnes Hulden, whom you know better perhaps as the redoubtable right strike for the Tanchinaros."

The three men exchanged salutes; both Filidice and Daul spoke politely of Glinnes' play on the hussade field. Filidice, a large heavy-chested man with pale melancholy features and cold blue eyes wore a suit of buff gabardine trimmed with black braid. Daul was thin and spare, with long thin arms, long hands, long fingers. Under a clot of dead black ringlets his face was as pale as that of his superior, with bony over-emphatic features. Daul's manner was polite and delicate to the extreme, as if he could not bear the thought of giving offense.

Akadie addressed Glinnes in his most pedantic voice. "These two gentlemen, both able and dispassionate public servants, tell me that I have connived with the starmenter Sagmondo Bandolio. They have explained that the ransom money paid to me remains in my custody. I find myself doubting my own innocence. Can you reassure me?"

"In my opinion," said Glinnes, "you'd do anything to gain an ozol except take a chance."

"That's not quite what I meant. Did you not direct a messenger to my house, did you not arrive to find me in conference with a certain Ryl Shermatz and my telephone switched off?"

"Precisely true," said Glinnes.

Chief Constable Filidice spoke in a mild voice, "I assure you, Janno Akadie, that we come to you principally because there is nowhere else to

go. The money reached you, then disappeared. It was not received by Bandolio. We have explored his mind, and he is not deceiving us; in fact, he has been most frank and cordial."

Glinnes asked, "What were the arrangements, according to Bandolio?"

"The situation is most curious. Bandolio worked with a person fanatically cautious, a person who—to quote you—'would do anything to earn an ozol except take a chance'. This person initiated the project. He sent Bandolio a message through channels known only to starmenters, which suggests that this person—let us call him X—was either a starmenter himself or had such an accomplice."

"It is well known that I am no starmenter," declared Akadie.

Filidice nodded ponderously. "Still—speaking hypothetically—you have many acquaintances among whom might be a starmenter or an ex-starmenter."

Akadie looked somewhat blank. "I suppose that this is possible."

Filidice went on. "Upon receipt of the message Bandolio made arrangements to meet X. These arrangements were complicated; both men were wary. They met at a place near Welgen, in the dark. X wore a hussade mask. His plan was most simple. At a hussade game he would arrange that the wealthiest folk of the prefecture all sat in a single section; he would ensure this by sending out free tickets. X would receive two million ozols. Bandolio would take the rest.

"The scheme seemed sound; Bandolio agreed to the plan and events proceeded as we know. Bandolio sent a

trusted lieutenant, a certain Lempel, here to receive the money from the collecting agency, which is to say, yourself."

Akadie frowned dubiously. "The messenger was Lempel?"

"No. Lempel arrived at the Port Maheul space port a week after the raid. He never departed; in fact he was poisoned, presumably by X. He died in his sleep at the Travelers Inn in Welgen, the day before the news of Bandolio's capture arrived."

"That would be the day before I gave up the money."

Chief Constable Filidice merely smiled. "The ransom money was certainly not in his effects. So: I lay the facts before you. You had the money. Lempel did not have it. Where did it go?"

"He probably made arrangements with the messenger before he was poisoned. The messenger must have the money."

"But who is this mysterious messenger? Certain of the lords regard him as sheer fabrication."

Akadie said in a clear careful voice, "I now make this formal statement. I delivered the money to a messenger in accordance with instructions. A certain Ryl Shermatz was present at the time, and so much as witnessed the transfer."

Daul spoke for the first time. "He actually saw the money change hands?"

"He very probably saw me give the messenger a black case."

Daul fluttered one of his long-fingered hands. "A suspicious man might wonder if the case contained the money."

Akadie responded coldly: "A sensible

man would realize that I would dare steal not so much as an ozol from Sagmondo Bandolio, let alone thirty million."

"But by this time Bandolio was captured."

"I knew nothing of this. You can verify the fact through Ryl Shermatz."

"Ah, the mysterious Ryl Shermatz. Who is he?"

"An itinerant journalist."

"Indeed! And where is he now?"

"I saw him two days ago. He said that he was soon to be leaving Trullion. Perhaps he is gone—where I don't know."

"But he is your single corroboratory witness."

"By no means. The messenger took a wrong turning and asked Glinnes Hulden for directions. True?"

"True," said Glinnes.

"Janno Akadie's description of this 'messenger'—'Daul gave the word a dry emphasis—'is unfortunately too general to assist us.'"

"What can I say?" demanded Akadie. "He was a young man of average size and ordinary appearance. He had no distinguishing features."

Filidice turned to Glinnes. You agree to this?"

"Absolutely."

"And he provided no identification when he spoke to you?"

Glinnes cast his mind back across the weeks. "As I recall, he asked directions to Akadie's manse, no more." Glinnes broke off somewhat abruptly. Daul instantly suspicious thrust his face forward. "And nothing else?"

Glinnes shook his head, and spoke decisively. "Nothing else."

Daul drew back. There was a moment of silence. Then Filidice said ponderously: "A pity that none of these persons you mention are available to confirm your remarks."

Akadie at last made a show of indignation. "I see no need for corroboration! I refuse to acknowledge that I need do more than enunciate the facts!"

"Under ordinary circumstances, yes," said Filidice. "With thirty million ozols missing, no."

"You now know as much as I," declared Akadie. "Hopefully you will pursue a fruitful investigation."

Chief Constable Filidice gave a disconsolate grunt. "We are grasping at straws. The money exists—somewhere."

"Not here, I assure you," said Akadie.

Glinnes could no longer restrain himself. He went to the door. "Fair weather for all. I must see to my affairs."

The constables gave him courteous farewell; Akadie spared only a peevish glance. Glinnes almost ran to his boat. He drove east along Vernel Water, then, instead of swinging south he turned north along Sarpent Channel, then out into the swirl of Karbashe River. He proceeded back and forth up the meanders, every hundred yards cursing himself for his own stupidity. At the confluence of the Lesser Scurge with the Karbashe was Erch, a sleepy village almost hidden in the shade of enormous candlenut trees, where long ago the Tanchinaros had defeated the Elements.

Glinnes tied his boat to the dock and

spoke to a man sitting outside the ramshackle wine-shop. "Where can I find a certain Jarcony? Or perhaps it's Jarcom?"

"Jarcony? Which one do you seek? Father? Son? Or the cavout dealer?"

"I want the young man who works in a blue uniform."

"That should be Remo. He's a steward on the Port Maheul ferry. You'll find him at home. Yonder, up the lane and under the thrackleberries."

Glinnes went up the path, to where a great shrub almost engulfed a cabin of poles and fronds. He pulled a cord to swing the clapper of a little bell; a drowsy face peered from the window. "Who is it? And what for?"

"Resting after your labor, I see," said Glinnes. "Do you remember me?"

"Why, yes indeed. It's Glinnes Hulden. Well, well, think of that! Just a moment then."

Jarcony wrapped himself in his paray and swung back the creaking door. He pointed to a bower cut back into the thrackleberry thicket. "Sit down, if you will. Perhaps you'll take a cup of cool wine?"

"A good idea," said Glinnes.

Remo Jarcony brought forth a stoneware crock and a pair of mugs. "What conceivably brings you here to visit me?"

"A rather curious matter," said Glinnes. "As you recall I met you while you were seeking the manse of Janno Akadie."

"Quite true. I'd contracted a small errand for a gentleman of Port Maheul. Surely there's been no difficulty?"

"I believe you were to deliver a parcel, or something similar?"

"Quite true. Will you take another cup of wine?"

"With great pleasure. And you delivered the parcel?"

"I did as I was instructed. The gentleman evidently was satisfied as I haven't seen him since."

"May I ask the nature of those instructions?"

"Certainly. The gentleman required that I convey the parcel to the space depot at Port Maheul and place it in Locker 42, the key to which he gave me. I did as he required, thereby earning twenty ozols; money for nothing."

"Do you recall the gentleman who hired you?"

Jarcony squinted up into the foliage. "Not well. An offworlder, or so I believe: a man short and stocky with quick movements. He had a bald head as I recall, and a fine emerald in his ear, which I admired. Now, perhaps you'll enlighten me: why do you ask such questions?"

"It's very simple," said Glinnes. "The gentleman is a publisher from Gethryn; Akadie wants to add an appendix to the treatise which he put into the gentleman's custody."

"Ah! I understand."

"There's nothing much to it. I'll notify Akadie that his work must already be in Gethryn." Glinnes rose to his feet. "Thank you for the wine, and I must now return to Saurkash. . . Out of sheer curiosity, what did you do with the key to the locker?"

"I did as I was instructed and left it at the accomodation desk."

GLINNES PUSHED westward at top

speed, his wake bubbling the width of the narrow Jade Canal. He swept into Barabas River, hurling a white wave into the banked jardine trees along the shore, and slid hissing westward, slowing only when he approached Port Maheul. He tied up at the main dock with a few deft twists of the mooring line, then half-walked, half-trotted the mile to the transport terminal: a tall structure of black iron and glass crusted pale green and violet with age. The field beyond was empty both of space-ships and local air-transport.

Glinnes entered the depot and looked across the submarine gloom. Travelers sat on benches awaiting one or another of the scheduled air-buses. A bank of lockers stood along the wall beside the baggage office, where a clerk sat behind a low counter.

Glinnes crossed the room and inspected the lockers. Those available for use stood open with magnetic keys in the lock holes. The door to Locker 42 was closed. Glinnes glanced toward the baggage clerk, then tested the door, to find it immovable.

The locker was constructed of sound sheet-metal; the doors fit snugly. Glinnes seated himself on a nearby bench.

Various possibilities suggested themselves. Few of the lockers were in use. Among the fifty lockers, Glinnes counted only four closed doors. Was it too much to hope that Locker 42 still contained the black case? Not at all, thought Glinnes. It would seem that Lempel and the bald stocky off-worlder who had hired Jarcony were the same; Lempel had died before he had been able to claim the case in Locker 42. . .

So it would seem.

And now: how to get into Locker 42?

Glinnes examined the baggage clerk, a small man with wispy gray-russet hair, a long tremulous nose and an expression of foolish obstinacy. Hopeless to seek either direct or indirect cooperation here; the man seemed a living definition of pettifoggery.

Glinnes cogitated for five minutes. Then he rose to his feet and walked to the bank of lockers. Into the coin slot on the face of Locker 30 he deposited a coin. Closing the door, he withdrew the key.

He approached the baggage desk and placed the key upon the counter. The clerk came forward. "Yes, sir."

"Be good enough to hold this key for me," said Glinnes. "I don't care to carry it around."

The clerk took the key with a twitch of mouth. "How long will you be gone, sir? Some folk leave their keys a remorseless time."

"I'll be no more than a day or so." Glinnes placed a coin upon the counter. "For your trouble."

"Thank you." The clerk opened a drawer and dropped the key into a compartment.

Glinnes walked away and seated himself on a bench where he could watch the clerk.

An hour passed. An air-bus from Cape Flory dropped down upon the field, discharging passengers, engulfing others. At the baggage desk there was a flurry of activity; the clerk scrambled here and there among his racks and shelves. Glinnes watched him carefully. It would seem that after his exertions he might feel the need for a rest or a

visit to the lavatory; but instead, when the last patron had departed, the clerk poured himself a mug of cold tea, which he drank in a gulp and a second mug over which he ruminated a few minutes. Then he returned to his duties, and Glinnes resigned himself to patience.

Glinnes began to feel torpid. He watched folk come and go, and amused himself for a period speculating upon their occupations and secret lives, but presently became bored. What did he care for these commercial travelers, these grandfathers and grandmothers fresh home from visits, these functionaries and underlings? What of the clerk? And his bladder? Even as Glinnes watched the clerk sipped more tea. In what organ of his meager body was all this liquid stored? The idea provoked Glinnes himself to discomfort. He glanced across the depot to the lavatory. If he stepped within even for a moment the clerk might choose the same instant and his vigil would go for naught. . . Glinnes shifted his position. No doubt he could wait as long as the clerk. Fortitude had stood him in good stead on the hussade field; in a competition with the baggage clerk, fortitude once again would be the decisive factor.

People came and went; a man wearing a hat with a ridiculous yellow cockade; an old woman trailing an overpowering waft of musk; a pair of young men flaunting Fanscher costume and glancing from side to side to see who noticed their proud defiance. . . Glinnes crossed his legs, then uncrossed them. The baggage clerk came to a stool and began to make entries in a day-book. In order to slake his thirst he

poured another mug of tea from the jug. Glinnes rose to his feet and walked back and forth. The baggage clerk now stood at the counter, looking out across the depot. He seemed to be gnawing his lower lip. He turned and reached—no! cried Glinnes, not for the jug of tea! The man could not be human! But the clerk merely tapped in the stopper to the jug. He rubbed his chin and seemed to consider, while Glinnes stood by the wall, swaying back and forth.

The clerk came to a decision. He stepped out from behind the counter and walked toward the men's lavatory.

Groaning in mingled relief and anxiety, Glinnes edged forward. No one seemed to heed him. He ducked behind the counter, opened the drawer and looked into the compartment. Two keys. He took them both, closed the drawer and returned to the waiting area. No one, so far as he could perceive, had noticed his conduct.

Glinnes went directly to Locker 42. The first key in his hand carried a brown tag stamped with the black numerals 30. The tag of the second key displayed the number 42. Glinnes opened the locker. He drew out the black case and closed the door once more. Was there time to replace the keys? Glinnes thought not. He walked from the depot into the smoky light of avness, and headed back toward the dock. Along the way he stepped behind an old wall to relieve himself.

He found his boat as he had left it, and casting off the line, set forth to the east.

Steering with his knee, he attempted to open the case. The lock resisted the grip of his fingers; he applied a metal

bar and snapped back the latch. The cover slid aside. Glinnes touched the money within: neat bundles of Alastor certificates. Thirty million ozols.

CHAPTER 21

GLINNES COASTED into the Rabendary dock half an hour before midnight. The house was dark; Glay was not home. Glinnes put the case on the table and considered it a few minutes. He opened the lid and took forth certificates to the value of thirty thousand ozols, which he tucked into a jar and buried in the soil beside the verandah. Returning into the house he telephoned Akadie, but elicited only expanding red circles, to indicate that the telephone had been placed in a 'non-receptive' condition. Glinnes sat on the couch, feeling fatigue but no lassitude. Once more he telephoned Akadie's manse without response; then he took the black case to his boat and set forth to the north.

From the water Akadie's manse seemed dark. Akadie, a man who enjoyed nocturnal activity, would hardly be asleep. . . On the dock Glinnes spied a man standing still and quiet; he sheered away and stood offshore. The dark figure made no move. Glinnes called out; "Who's that on the dock?"

After a pause a voice, throaty and muffled, came quietly across the water: "Constable of the Prefecture, on guard duty."

"Is Janno Akadie at home?"

Again the pause, and the low voice. "No."

"Where is he?"

The pause, the muffled disinterested

voice. "He is in Welgen."

Glinnes jerked his boat around and sent it foaming back across Clinkhammer Broad, back down Farwan Water. When he arrived at Rabendary the house was still dark; Glay was elsewhere. Glinnes moored his boat and carried the black case inside. He telephoned the Gilweg house; the screen brightened to show the face of Varella, one of the younger girls. Only children were home; everyone else had gone visiting, to watch stars or drink wine, or perhaps to Welgen for the executions; she was not quite sure.

Glinnes darkened the telephone. He tucked the black case out of sight into the thatch, then flinging himself on his couch, almost instantly fell asleep.

THE MORNING was gay and crystalline. A warm breeze blew flurries of cat's paws across Ambal Broad; the sky showed a lilac clarity not often observed.

Glinnes ate a few bites of breakfast, and tried to call Akadie. A few minutes later a boat pulled up to the dock and Glay jumped ashore. Glinnes came out to meet him. Glay stopped short and looked Glinnes carefully up and down. "You seem excited."

"I've got enough money to pay off Casagave. We'll do it before the hour is out."

Glay looked across the broad at Ambal Isle, which in the fresh light of morning, had never looked lovelier. "Just as you say. But you had better telephone him first."

"Why?"

"To give him warning."

"I don't want to give him anything,"

said Glinnes. Nevertheless he went to the telephone. Lute Casagave's face appeared on the screen. He spoke in a metallic voice: "What is your business?"

"I have twelve thousand ozols for you," said Glinnes. "I now wish to void the contract of sale. I'll bring the money over at this moment, if it's convenient."

"Send the money over with the owner," said Casagave.

"I am the owner."

"Shira Hulden is the owner. I suppose he can void that contract if he chooses."

"Today I'll bring over an affidavit certifying the death of Shira."

"Indeed. And where will you get it?"

"From Janno Akadie, an official mentor of the prefecture, who witnessed the confession of his murderer."

"Indeed," said Casagave with a chuckle. The screen went blank. Glinnes spoke to Glay in a voice of puzzlement. "That isn't quite the reaction I anticipated. He showed no concern whatever."

Glay shrugged. "Why should he? Akadie is in jail. They'll put him on the prutanshyr if the lords have their way. Any certification of Akadie's is meaningless."

Glinnes rolled his eyes back and threw his arms high in the air. "Was anyone ever so dogged by frustration?" he cried.

Glay turned away without comment. Presently he went to his couch and fell asleep.

Glinnes strode back and forth along the verandah, deep in thought. Then venting an inarticulate curse he jumped into his boat and set forth to the east.

An hour later he arrived in Welgen and only with difficulty found a mooring along the crowded dock. An unusual number of folk had chosen this day to visit Welgen. The square was the scene of intense activity. Folk of town and fen moved restlessly here and there, always with one eye turned upon the prutanshyr, where workmen adjusted the cogs of a ponderous mechanism, the functioning of which Glinnes found perplexing. He paused to make inquiry of an old man who stood leaning on a staff. "What goes on at the prutanshyr?"

"Another of Filidice's follies." The old man spat contemptuously upon the cobbles. "He insists on these novel devices, which can hardly be coaxed to perform their function. Sixty-two pirates to be killed and yesterday the thing managed to grind asunder only a single man; today it must be repaired! Have you ever heard the like? In my day we were content with simpler devices."

Glinnes went on to the Office of the Constabulary, only to learn that Chief Constable Filidice was not on hand. Glinnes then requested five minutes with Janno Akadie, but was denied the privilege; today the jail might not be visited.

Glinnes returned to the square and took a seat under the arbor of The Noble Gambrinus, where so long ago (so it seemed) he had spoken with Junius Farfan. He ordered a half-gill of aquavit, which he drank at a gulp. How the fates conspired to thwart him! He had proved the fact of Shira's death and then had lost his money. He had gained new funds, but now he could no

longer prove Shira's death; he witness Akadie was invalidated and his principal, Vang Drosset, was dead!

So now: what to do? The thirty million ozols? A joke. He would throw the money to the merlings before turning it over the Chief Constable Filidice. Glinnes signaled the waiter for another half-gill of aquavit, and turned a lambent glance toward the adominable prutanshyr. To save Akadie it might be necessary to surrender the money—though for a fact the case against Akadie seemed extraordinarily thin. . . A shape darkened the entrance; squinting up against the glare Glinnes saw a person of middle height and unobtrusive demeanor, whom he thought to recognize. He looked more closely, then jumped to his feet with sudden energy. At his gesture the man approached. "If I am not mistaken," said Glinnes, "you are Ryl Shermatz. I am Glinners Hulden, a friend of the mentor Janno Akadie."

"Of course! I remember you well," said Shermatz. "And how does our friend Akadie?"

The waiter brought aquavit which Glinnes placed in front of Shermatz. "You will require this before long. . . I take it you have not heard the news?"

"I have only just returned from Morilia. Why do you ask?"

Stimulated by circumstances and by the aquavit, Glinnes spoke with a measure of hyperbole. "Akadie has been flung into a dungeon. He is accused of grand larceny and if the lords have their way, Akadie may well be inserted into the cogs of yonder mincing machine."

"Sad news indeed!" said Shermatz.

With a wry salute he raised the goblet to his mouth. "Akadie should never have aspired to chicanery; he lacks the cold decisiveness which distinguishes the successful criminal."

"You miss my point," said Glinnes somewhat testily. "The charge is absolutely absurd."

"I am surprised to hear you speak so definitely," said Shermatz.

"If necessary; Akadie's innocence could be demonstrated in a manner to convince anyone. But this is not the point. I wonder why Filidice, apparently from sheer suspicion, has imprisoned Akadie, while the guilty man goes free."

"An interesting speculation. Can you name the guilty man?"

Glinnes shook his head. "I wish I could—especially if a certain man is the guilty party."

"And why do you confide in me?"

"You observed Akadie transfer the money to the messenger. Your testimony will free him."

I saw a black case change hands. It might have held almost anything."

Glinnes chose his words with care. "You probably wonder why I am so confident of Akadie's innocence. The reason is simple. I know for a fact that he disposed of the money as he claimed. Bandolio was captured; his aide Lempel was murdered. The money was never claimed. In my opinion the importunate lords deserve the money no more than Bandolio. I am disinclined to assist either side."

Shermatz made a grave sign of comprehension. "A nod is as good as a wink. If Akadie is in fact innocent, who is Bandolio's real accomplice?"

"I am surprised that Bandolio had not provided definite information; but Chief Constable Filidice won't allow me a word with Akadie, much less Bandolio."

"I'm not sure of that." Shermatz rose to his feet. "A few words with Chief Constable Filidice might be worthwhile."

"Return to your seat," said Glinnes. "He won't see us."

"I think he will. I am something more than a roving journalist, as I hold the commission of Over-inspector in the Whelm. Chief Constable Filidice will see us with pleasure. Let us go at once to make the inquiry. Where is he to be found?"

"Yonder is his headquarters," said Glinnes. "The structure is dilapidated, but here in Welgen it represents the majesty of Trill law."

GLINNES AND Ryl Shermatz waited in a foyer only briefly before Chief Constable Filidice came forth, his face expressing concern. "What is this again? Who are you, sir?"

Shermatz placed a metal plate upon the counter. "Please assure yourself of my credentials."

Filidice glumly studied the plate. "I am of course at your service."

"I am here in connection with the starmerter Bandolio," said Shermatz. "You have questioned him?"

"To some extent. There was no reason to undertake any exhaustive inquiry."

"Have you discovered his local accomplice?"

Filidice gave a curt nod. "He was assisted by a certain Janno Akadie,

whom we have taken into custody."

"You are assured then of Akadie's guilt?"

"The evidence very clearly suggests as much."

"Has he confessed?"

"No."

"Have you placed him under psychohallation?"

"We lack such equipment here at Welgen."

"I would like to examine both Bandolio and Akadie; Akadie first, if you please."

Filidice turned to an under-constable and gave the necessary orders. To Shermatz and Glinnes: "Will you be good enough to step into my office?"

Five minutes later Akadie was thrust complaining and expostulating into the office. At the sight of Glinnes and Shermatz he fell abruptly silent.

Shermatz said courteously, "Good morning, Janno Akadie; it is a pleasure to see you again."

"Not under these circumstances! Would you believe it? They have me pent in a cell, like a criminal! I thought they were taking me to the prutanshyr! Have you ever heard the like?"

"I hope that we will be able to clarify the matter." Shermatz turned to Filidice. "What precisely are the charges against Akadie?"

"That he conspired with Sagmondo Bandolio and that he has sequestered thirty million ozols which are not his property."

"Both charges are false!" cried Akadie. "Someone is plotting against me!"

"We will certainly arrive at the truth of the matter," said Shermatz. "Sup-

pose we now hear what the starmenter Bandolio has to say?"

Filidice spoke to his underling and presently Sagmondo Bandolio entered the room: a tall black-bearded man, bald, with a black tonsure; lucent blue eyes and a placid expression. Here was a man who had commanded five dire ships and four hundred men, who had dispensed tragedy ten thousand times, for purposes he alone could define.

Shermatz signaled him forward. "Sagmondo Bandolio, out of sheer curiosity, do you regret the life you have lived?"

Bandolio smiled politely. "I regret the last two weeks, certainly. As to the period prior, the subject is complex, and in any event I would not know how to answer your question accurately; hindsight is the least useful of our intellectual capabilities."

"We are making an inquiry into the foray upon Welgen. Can you identify your local accomplice more definitely?"

Bandolio pulled at his beard. "I have not identified him at all, unless my recollection is at fault."

Chief Constable Filidice said: "He was subjected to mind-search. He has retained no clandestine information."

"What information has he given you?"

"The initiative came from Trullion. Bandolio received a proposal through secret starmenter channels; he sent down a subaltern by the name of Lempel to make a preliminary inspection. Lempel rendered an optimistic report and Bandolio himself came down to Trullion. On a beach near Welgen, he met the Trill who became his accomplice. The meeting oc-

cured at midnight. The Trill wore a hussade mask and spoke in a cultivated voice. Bandolio says he could not identify. They made their arrangements, and Bandolio never saw the man again. He assigned Lempel to the project; Lempel is now dead. Bandolio professes no other information and psychohallation corroborates his claim."

Shermatz turned to Bandolio. "Is this an accurate summation?"

"It is indeed, except for a suspicion that my local confederate persuaded Lempel to give information to the Whelm, so that the two might divide the whole of the ransom. After the Whelm was notified, Lempel's life came to an end."

"So then you have no reason to conceal the identity of your accomplice?"

"To the contrary. My dearest wish is to see him dance to music of the putanshyr."

"Before you stands Janno Akadie. Is he known to you?"

"No."

"Is it possible that Akadie was your confederate?"

"No. The man was as tall as myself."

Shermatz looked at Filidice. "And there you have it: a grievous error which luckily was not consummated upon the putanshyr."

Filidice's pale countenance showed a dew of perspiration. "I assure you, I was exposed to intolerable pressure! The Order of Aristocrats insisted that I act; they authorized Lord Gensifer, the secretary, to demand definite activity. I could not locate the money, so then. . . ." Filidice paused and licked his lips.

"To appease the Order of Aristocrats

you imprisoned Janno Akadie."

"It seemed an obvious course of action."

Glinnes asked Bandalio: "You met your confederate by starlight?"

"So I did." Bandalio seemed almost jovial.

"What were his garments?"

"The Trill paray and the Trill cape, with wide padding, or epaulettes, or wings; only a Trill would know their function. His silhouette, as he stood on the shore was that of a great black bird, in his hussade mask."

"So you came to stand close to him."

"A distance of six feet separated us."

"What mask did he wear?"

Bandalio laughed. "How should I know your local masks? Horns protruded as the temple; the mouth showed fangs and a tongue lolled loose. Indeed I felt I faced a monster there on the beach."

"What of his voice?"

"A hoarse mutter; he wanted no recognition."

"His gestures, mannerisms, quirks of stance?"

"None. He made no movement."

"His boat?"

"An ordinary runabout."

"And what was the date of this occasion?"

"The fourth day of Lyssum."

Glinnes considered a moment. "You received all further signals from Lempel?"

"True."

"You had no other contact with the man in the hussade mask?"

"None."

"What was his precise function?"

"He undertook to seat the three

hundred richest men of the prefecture in section D of the stadium, and so he did to perfection."

Filidice interposed a remark. "The seats were bought anonymously and sent out by messenger. They offer no clue."

Ryl Shermatz considered Filidice a long thoughtful moment, upon which Filidice became uneasy. Shermatz said: "I am puzzled as to why you imprisoned Janno Akadie on evidence which even at first glance seems ambiguous."

Filidice spoke with dignity. "I received confidential information from an irreproachable source. Under the conditions of emergency and public agitation I decided to act with decision."

"The information is confidential, you say?"

"Well, yes."

"And who is the irreproachable source?"

Filidice hesitated, then made a weary gesture. "The secretary of the Order of Lords convinced me that Akadie knew the whereabouts of the ransom money. He recommended that Akadie be imprisoned and threatened with the prutanshyr until he agreed to relinquish the money."

"The Secretary of the Order of Lords. . . That would be Lord Gensifer."

"Precisely so," said Filidice.

"That ingrate!" hissed Akadie. "I will have a word with him."

"It might be interesting to learn the rationale behind his accusation," mused Shermatz. "I suggest that we undertake a visit to Lord Gensifer."

Filidice held up his hand. "Today would be most inopportune for Lord

Gensifer. The gentry of the region are at Gensifer Manse to celebrate Lord Gensifer's wedding."

"I am concerned for Lord Gensifer's convenience," declared Akadie, "to the exact extent that he is concerned with mine. We will visit him at this moment."

"I quite agree with Janno Akadie," said Glinnes. "Especially as we will be able to identify the true criminal and take him into custody."

Ryl Shermatz spoke in a quizzical voice. "You speak with peculiar assurance."

"Conceivably I am mistaken," said Glinnes. "For this reason I feel that we should take Sagmondo Bandolio with us."

Filidice, with affairs slipping beyond his control, became correspondingly assertive. "This is not a sensible idea. In the first place, Bandolio is most supple and elusive; he must not cheat the putrانشyr. Secondly, he has declared himself unable to render any identification; the criminal's features were concealed by a mask. Thirdly, I find questionable, to say the least, the theory that we will find the guilty person at Lord Gensifer's wedding ceremony. I do not wish to create a tomfoolery and make myself a laughing-stock."

Shermatz said, "A conscientious man is never diminished by doing his duty. I suggest that we pursue our investigation without regard for side-issues."

Filidice gave a despondent acquiescence. "Very well, let us proceed to Gensifer manse. Constable, confine the prisoner! Let the shackles by doubly

locked and a trip-wire fastened around his neck."

THE BLACK AND GRAY official boat drove across Fleharish Broad toward the Five Islands. Half a hundred boats clustered against the dock, and the walk was decorated with festoons of silk ribbon: scarlet, yellow and pink. Through the gardens strolled lords and ladies in the splendid archaic garments worn only at the most formal occasions, and which ordinary folk were never privileged to glimpse.

The official party walked up the path, aware of their own incongruity. Chief Constable Filidice in particular struggled between pent fury and embarrassment; Ryl Shermatz was placid enough and Sagmondo Bandolio seemed actively to enjoy the situation; he held his head high and turned his gaze cheerfully this way and that. An old steward saw them and hastened forward in consternation. Filidice gave a muttered explanation; the steward's face drooped in displeasure. "Certainly you cannot intrude upon the ceremonies; the rites are shortly to take place. This is a most outrageous proceeding!"

Chief Constable Filidice's self-control quivered. He spoke in a vibrant voice: "Silence! This is official business! Be off with you—no, wait! We may have instructions for you." He looked sourly at Shermatz: "What are your wishes?"

Shermatz turned to Glinnes. "What is your suggestion?"

"One moment," said Glinnes. He looked across the garden, seeking among the two hundred folk present.

Never had he seen such a gorgeous array of costumes: the velvet capes of the lords with heraldic blazons on the back; the gowns of the ladies, belted and fringed with black coral beads, or crystallized merling scales, or rectangular tourmalines, with tiaras to match. Glinnes looked from face to face; Lute Casagave—Lord Ambal as he chose to call himself—would necessarily be on hand. He saw Duissane, in a simple white gown and a wisp of a white turban. Feeling his gaze she turned and saw him. Glinnes felt an emotion to which he could put no name: the sense of something precious departing, something leaving to be lost forever. Lord Gensifer stood nearby. He became aware of the new arrivals and frowned in surprise and displeasure.

Someone nearby turned on his heel and began to walk away. The motion caught Glinnes' attention; he jumped forward, caught the man's arm, swung him around. "Lute Casagave."

Casagave's face was pale and austere. "I am Lord Ambal. How dare you touch me?"

"Be so good as to step this way," said Glinnes. "The matter is important."

"I choose to do nothing of the kind."

"Then stand here." Glinnes signaled the members of his group. Casagave once again sought to walk away; Glinnes pulled him back. Casagave's face was now white and dangerous. "What do you want of me?"

"Observe," said Glinnes. "This is Ryl Shermatz, Chief Inspector of the Whelm. This is Janno Akadie, a formerly accredited mentor of Jolany Prefecture. Both witnessed Vang Drosset's confession that he had mur-

dered Shira Hulden. I am Squire of Rabendary and I now demand that you depart Ambal Isle at once."

Lute Casagave made no response. Filidice asked peevishly: "Is this why you brought us here, merely to confront Lord Ambal?"

Sagmondo Bandalio's merry laugh interrupted him. "Lord Ambal now! Not so in the old days. Not so indeed!"

Casagave turned to depart, but Shermatz's easy voice checked him. "Just a moment if you please. This is an official inquiry, and the question of your identity becomes important."

"I am Lord Ambal; that is sufficient."

Ryl Shermatz swung his mild gaze to Bandalio. "You know him by another name?"

"By another name and by many another deed, some of which have caused me pain. He has done what I should have done ten years ago—retired with his loot. Here you see Alonzo Dirrig, sometimes known as the Ice Devil and Dirrig the Skull-maker, one-time master of four ships, as adept among the starments as any you might find."

"You are mistaken, whoever you may be." Casagave bowed and made as if to turn away.

"Not so fast!" said Filidice. "Perhaps we have made an important discovery. If this is the case, then Janno Akadie is vindicated. Lord Ambal, do you deny the charge of Sagmondo Bandalio?"

"There is nothing to deny. The man is mistaken."

Bandalio gave a mocking caw of laughter. "Look across the palm of his

left hand; you'll see a scar I put there myself."

Filidice went on: "Do you deny that you are the person Alonzo Dirrig; that you conspired to kidnap three hundred lords of the prefecture; that subsequently you killed a certain Lempel?"

Casagave's lip curled. "Of course I deny it. Prove it, if you can!"

Filidice turned to Glinnes. "Where is your proof?"

"One moment," said Shermatz in a voice of perplexity. He spoke to Bandolio: "Is this the man with whom you conversed on the beach near Welgen?"

"Alonzo Dirrig calling on me to implement his schemes? Never, never, never; not Alonzo Dirrig."

Filidice looked dubiously at Glinnes. "So then, you are wrong, after all."

Glinnes said: "Not so fast! I never accused Casagave, or Dirrig, whatever his name, of anything. I merely brought him here to clear up an incidental bit of business."

Casagave turned and strode away. Ryl Shermatz made a gesture; Filidice instructed his two constables: "After him! Take him into custody." The constables ran off. Casagave looked over his shoulder and observing pursuit, bounded out upon the dock and into his boat. With a surge and thrash of foam, he sped away across Fleharish Broad.

Filidice roared to the constables: "Follow in the launch; keep him in sight! Radio for reinforcements; take him into custody!"

Lord Gensifer confronted them, face clenched in displeasure. "Why do you cause this disturbance? Can you not observe that we celebrate a solemn

occasion?"

Chief Constable Filidice spoke with what dignity he could muster. "We are naturally distressed by our intrusion. We had reason to suspect that Lord Ambal was the accomplice of Sagmondo Bandolio. Apparently this is not the case."

Lord Genifer's face became pink. He glanced at Akadie, then back to Filidice: "Of course this is not the case! Have we not discussed the matter at length? We know Bandolio's accomplice!"

"Indeed," said Akadie in a voice like a saw cutting a nail. "And who is this person?"

"It is the faithless mentor who so craftily collected and then secreted thirty million ozols!" declared Lord Gensifer. "His name is Janno Akadie!"

Ryl Shermatz said silkily: "Sagmondo Bandolio disputes this theory. He says Akadie is not the man."

Lord Gensifer threw his arms up in the air. "Very well then; Akadie is innocent! Who cares? I am sick of the whole matter! Please depart; you are intruding upon my property and upon a solemn ritual."

"Accept my apologies," said Chief Constable Filidice. "I assure you that this was not my scheme. Come then, gentlemen, we will—"

"Just a moment," said Glinnes. "We haven't yet touched the nub of the matter. Sagmondo Bandolio cannot positively identify the man he faced on the beach but he quite definitely can identify the mask. Lord Gensifer, will you bring forth one of the Fleharish Gorgon helmets?"

Lord Gensifer drew himself up. "I most certainly will not. What sort of farce is this? Once more I require that you depart!"

Glinnes ignored him and spoke to Filidice. "When Bandalio described horns and the lolling tongue of the mask I instantly thought of the Fleharish Gorgons. On the fourth day of Lyssum when the meeting took place the Gorgons had not yet been issued their uniforms. Only Lord Gensifer could have used a Gorgon helmet. Therefore, Lord Gensifer is the guilty man!"

What are you saying?" gasped Filidice, eyes bulging in astonishment.

"Aha!" screamed Akadie and flung himself upon Lord Gensifer. Glinnes caught him and pulled him back.

"What insane libel are you setting forth?" roared Lord Gensifer, his face suddenly mottled. "Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"It is ridiculous," declared Filidice. "I will hear no more."

"Gently, gently," said Ryl Shermatz, smiling faintly. "Surely Glinnes Hulden's theory deserves consideration. In my opinion it appears to be definite, particular, exclusive, and sufficient."

Filidice spoke in a subdued voice: "Lord Gensifer is a most important man; he is secreatary of the Order—"

"And as such, he forced you to imprison Akadie," said Glinnes.

Lord Gensifer furiously waved his finger at Glinnes, but could bring forth no words.

Chief Constable Filidice, in a plaintive grumble, asked Lord Gensifer: "Can you refute the accu-

sation? Did someone perhaps steal a helmet?"

Lord Gensifer nodded vehemently. "It goes without saying! Someone—Akadie, no doubt—stole a Gorgon helmet from my storeroom."

"In that case," said Glinnes, "one will now be missing. Let us go to count the helmets."

Lord Gensifer aimed a wild blow at Glinnes who ducked back out of the way. Shermatz signaled Filidice: "Arrent this gentleman, take him to the jail. We will put him through psychohallation, and the truth will be known."

"By no means," belched Lord Gensifer in a guttural voice. "I'll never stand to the prutanshyr." Like Casagave, he turned and ran along the dock, while his guests watched in fascinated wonder; never had they known such a wedding.

"After him," said Shermatz curtly. Chief Constable Filidice lurched off in pursuit, and pounded down the dock to where Lord Gensifer had jumped into his runabout. Dismissing caution Filidice leapt after him. Lord Gensifer tried to buffet him aside; Filidice, falling upon Lord Gensifer, drove him backward, over the gunwhale and into the water.

Lord Gensifer swam under the dock. Filidice called after him: "It's no use, Lord Gensifer; justice must be served. Come forth, if you will!"

Only a swirl of water indicated Lord Gensifer's presence. Filidice called again: "Lord Gensifer! Why make needless difficulty for us all? Come forth; you cannot escape!"

From under the dock came a hoarse

ejaculation, then a moment of frantic splashing, then silence. Filidice slowly straightened from his crouching position. He stood staring down at the water, his face ashen. He climbed to the dock and rejoined Ryl Shermatz, Glinnes and Akadie. "We may now declare the case closed," he said. "The thirty million ozols—they remain a mystery. Perhaps we will never learn the truth."

Ryl Shermatz looked toward Glinnes, who licked his lips and frowned. "Well, I suppose it makes little difference, one way or the other," said Shermatz. "But where is our captive Bandalio? Is it possible that the rascal has taken advantage of the confusion?"

"So it would seem," said Filidice disconsolately. "He is gone! What an unhappy day we have had!"

"To the contrary," said Akadie. "It has been the most rewarding of my life."

Glinnes said: "Casagave has been evicted; for this I am most grateful. It's an excellent day for me, as well."

Filidice rubbed his forehead. "I am still bewildered. Lord Gensifer seemed the very apotheosis of rectitude!"

"Lord Gensifer acted at precisely the wrong time," said Glinnes. "He killed Lempel after Lempel had instructed the messenger, but before the money had

been delivered. He probably believed Akadie to be as unprincipled as himself."

"A sad case," said Akadie. "And the thirty million ozols, who knows where? Perhaps on some distant world the messenger is now enjoying his astonishing new affluence."

"That is probably the size of it," said Filidice. "Well, I suppose I must make some sort of statement to the guests."

"Excuse me," said Glinnes. "There is someone I must see." He crossed the garden to where he had seen Duissane. She was gone. He looked this way and that, but saw no Duissane. Might she have gone into the house? He thought not: the house no longer had meaning for Duissane. . . A path led around the house to the beach which fronted upon the ocean. Glinnes ran down the path and saw Duissane standing on the sand looking across the water, toward that blank area where the horizon met the ocean.

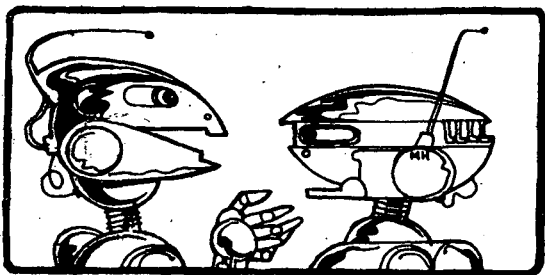
Glinnes joined her. She stopped and looked at him, as if never had she seen him before. She turned away and went slowly eastward along the sound. Glinnes moved after her and in the hazy light of middle afternoon they walked together down the beach.

—JACK VANCE

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THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR

by Bob Shaw & Walt Willis

(CONCLUSION)

In this issue The Clubhouse concludes the four-part serialization of the classic (1954) allegory of Jophan's progress through Fandom. Jophan, originally a bookish resident of Mundane, has been visited by the Spirit of Fandom and given a vision of Fandom and a Shield of Umor (a sense of humor). He sets out on a long journey to find the Enchanted Duplicator and publish the Perfect Fanzine.

Having crossed the Mountains of Inertia and the Jungle of Inexperience, Jophan now finds himself in the Desert of Indifference, accompanied by members of a strange tribe of native bearers, the Subrs, his only sustenance occasional manna-scripts which fall from a blaze of light in the sky ... (Footnotes will be found at the conclusion of the story.)

**CHAPTER FIFTEEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN
ENTERS THE REGION OF OASES**

But Jophan's difficulties were by no means at an end. The scorching heat by day and the bitter cold by night made sleep almost impossible, and as time went on he became more and more exhausted. But he staggered on dauntlessly, searching ceaselessly through red-rimmed eyes for some sign of the end of this terrible desert.

Shortly before nightfall one day they

come upon an oasis. Jophan let his feeble limbs carry him into the welcome shade of the trees and lay down to rest for the night, observing as he did so a flock of gaily-plumaged birds flitting to and fro among the trees, to the accompaniment of their sweet song. It sounded like "Bu! Bu!" Idly he asked one of the Subrs what the birds were called. "Bu-birds," replied the Subr laconically. Smiling quietly to himself at the ingenuous reply, Jophan went to sleep.

Whether it was the soothing song of the birds, or the fact that the oasis retained its heat longer than the open desert, Jophan slept unusually well. Nevertheless, he realized when he awoke next morning that he was in no fit state to resume the march. His limbs were stiff and enfeebled, and it was all he could do to raise his head and look about him. He knew he would have to rest awhile here in the hope of regaining his strength.

As he was about to lie back again, however, he noticed just a few feet away from him a beautiful translucent egg, which must, he realized, have been laid by one of the Bu-birds during the night. It occurred to him that it would make a welcome addition to his diet, and reaching out painfully for it, he pierced a hole at each end and raised it to his mouth.

As the first mouthful of the liquid passed his lips Jophan almost choked in his astonishment. This was clearly no ordinary egg. The fluid it contained was cool, refreshing and intoxicatingly delicious to the taste. With each drop Jophan felt new energy flooding through his body. When the egg was finished he jumped to his feet and began to run eagerly round the oasis looking for more, so intent on the search that he scarcely noticed how quickly his tiredness had been replaced with boundless energy and enthusiasm.

Soon he had opened all the eggs he could find and poured their contents into one of the empty waterbottles. Then he called his party together and strode confidently into the desert at their head.

During the days which followed he found that when his energy began to flag all that was necessary was to take a

draught of the life-giving fluid. Instantly his vigor and enthusiasm was restored. Furthermore he had apparently reached an area of the desert where oases were plentiful, and each morning he usually collected a sufficient quantity of "Egg o' Bu," as he now affectionately called it, to sustain him for the day's journey.¹ He was now able to dispense almost completely with ordinary food and water, and would indeed have been prepared to do without the help of the Subrs had that been necessary. The only ill effects he noticed were that over-indulgence in the elixir was inclined to produce a species of intoxication and a painless but unsightly swelling of the head. These he resolved to guard against as carefully as he could.

Jophan now began to make very rapid progress, and with each day the changes in the character of the desert became more profound. The days were cooler, the nights warmer, and oases increasingly numerous. Mirages began to appear of the high mountains of Trufandom, and though he was disappointed each time on finding they were illusions, he consoled himself with the thought that they indicated he was approaching his goal.

At last his patience was rewarded. One morning he breasted a long, low ridge of sand-dunes, to see before him, far too clear to be a mirage, a stupendous mountain range stretching as far as the eye could see. Beyond those mountains, he knew with a thrill of awe, must lie the Land of Trufandom.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN ENTERS THE CANYON OF CRITICISM

Jophan now pressed on with redoubled energy, and by evening he could

plainly see a deep rocky cleft leading into the mountains. This, he knew, must be the Canyon of Criticism, the only route through the mountains to Trufandom. He resolved to fortify himself with a night's sleep before attempting this new peril, and spent the night at an oasis.

Next morning, having partaken cautiously of the Egg o' Bu lest it should dull his perceptions, Jophan set out for the entrance to the Canyon. As he approached it he noticed other Neofen converging on the point from all directions. They rushed past, wild-eyed and eager, and plunged into the Canyon. They had obviously partaken too freely of Egg o' Bu, for their eyes were glazed, their steps unsteady, their heads unnaturally swollen and their clothes and shields neglected and dirty. Reluctant as he was to let them overtake him, he took thought of his previous experiences and the warnings he had been given. He polished his Shield of Umor hastily, checked his provisions, and only then set foot cautiously into the Canyon.

The path proved to be along the side of the Canyon rather than at its foot. After he had travelled some distance Jophan noticed that while the ground still fell away sharply to his left, the cliff on his right had gradually merged into a more gentle slope. Along this the path split into several smaller paths which wound their separate ways along the mountainside.

As he picked his way over the rougher ground he heard a clatter of falling rock in front of him, and looked upwards in time to see several small stones bounding toward him over an overhanging boulder. Hastily he brought up his shield and covered

himself with it. Most of the stones bounced harmlessly off it, but to his dismay one of them passed through as if the shield were made of vapor, and dealt him a severe blow on the shoulder. Suppressing a cry of pain, Jophan looked closely at his shield. There was, he now noticed, a tarnished patch which had escaped the hasty polishing he had done that morning. Retreating quickly to safety, he polished his shield to a uniform brilliance. Then he ventured again towards the danger area, looking curiously ahead to see how the other Neofen were faring.

It was a dreadful sight that met his eyes. Lying on the paths were the crushed and bleeding bodies of many of the Neofen who had passed him that morning. Among them others staggered about, panic-stricken, trying to dodge the hail of stones. But their minds were so befuddled, and their swollen heads so vulnerable beneath their tiny and tarnished shields, that the efforts of many were in vain. Even as he watched, one of the unfortunate wretches was struck from the path by a particularly heavy stone, and with a heart rending scream vanished from sight down the rocky slope.

On emerging from the lee of the big boulder which had been affording him some shelter, Jophan shielded his eyes from the sun and peered up the slope to try to discover why the falls of rock were so frequent. To his horror he saw, outlined against the sky, a row of dark, misshapen little men busily engaged in uprooting stones and hurling them at the defenceless Neofen below. He watched them for a while, but they showed no sign of abating their activities. Indeed, they did not even

seem to stop for food for he noticed one dwarf hurling stones with one hand and with the other eating what appeared to be a bunch of small sour grapes.

This last sight caused Jophan to decide that there was no point in delaying further. As he ventured forth a savage howl arose from the dwarfs, and the grape-eater seized a particularly sharp stone and threw it with tremendous speed directly at Jophan. Without flinching Jophan held his shield firmly above his head. The stone bounced harmlessly off the shield and back to the thrower with undiminished force. With grim satisfaction he observed it strike the dwarf with deadly effect, dislodging him from his perch so that he fell screaming down the slope and vanished into the abyss.

Greatly pleased by the excellence of his shield, Jophan proceeded along the path. The dwarfs seemed to have learned a lesson from a taste of their own medicine, and such stones as were thrown in his direction were cast in such a tentative and half-hearted manner that he could almost afford to ignore them. He began to think that the perils of the Canyon were at an end.²

This mood of over-confidence was soon rudely shattered. On rounding the next curve in the path he suddenly found himself in semi-darkness. Thinking that some cloud had passed over the sun, he looked up casually. His heart almost failed him to see that the shadow was cast by several huge, swarthy giants sitting drowsily among the swarming dwarfs on the crest of the cliff.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: IN WHICH
JOPHAN CONTINUES THROUGH THE
CANYON

Even as Jophan watched, one of the giants awoke, snorting angrily. With no apparent reason, or even perception of what he was doing, the giant uttered a great bellow of wrath, seized a boulder as large as a house and hurled it down the slope. The huge mass of rock hurtled down into a line of Neofen, smashing several into the ground despite their upraised Shields of Umor, and continued on its ways down the mountainside, bounding from path to path, and sometimes carrying away whole fan groups at a time.

When the last despairing cry had died away, Jophan looked back up the slope to see that the giant had settled back down to sleep, a contented, imbecilic smile on his countenance. Shuddering with disgust and fear, Jophan withdrew a few paces and sat down in the entrance to a cave to recover his nerve.

The sound of his own breathing had barely subsided when he was again startled by a clicking noise behind him. He turned round sharply, and, as his eyes became more accustomed to the semi-darkness, he could see that the noise came from a Neofan who was striking at a flat piece of stone with a tiny axe. He was so intent on his work that he did not notice Jophan's presence until the latter spoke to him.

"What are these dreadful beings?" asked Jophan fearfully, speaking the first thought in his mind.

"They belong to a race known as Magrevoos," said the Neofan knowledgeably. "The dwarfs are called Fanmagrevoos and the giants Promagrevoos. Many of them are not really evil, merely thoughtless and stupid. The giants, for example, have no idea of their own strength, and do not understand half of what is going on

down here. In fact they would probably ignore us altogether were it not for the fact that they were continually being prodded into activity by a strange and powerful tribe known as the Headeaters, who live in the mountains." As he spoke, he lifted up the flat stone, which Jophan now saw to be covered with neatly-cut lettering, and carried it to the mouth of the cave. He beckoned Jophan to follow him.

"Moreover," he went on, "there are other Magrevoos who do their best to make up for the harm done by their fellows. They are known as the Fair Ones. Watch!"

Jophan looked again at the scene of carnage on the mountainside. He saw that groups of fair-complexioned and kindly-faced dwarfs were passing among the victims reviving them with draughts of Egg o' Bu, raising them to their feet, and helping them some distance along the path. There was even a beautiful, blonde giantess assisting in the work of mercy. Jophan noticed, however, that while most of the dwarfs carefully selected those among the survivors who seemed most likely to benefit from their help, the giantess showed no such discrimination. Instead, she would sweep up a random heap of Neofen, including some who were obviously dead, drench them with Egg o' Bu from a large pitcher she carried slung over her shoulders, and with a few mighty strides deposit them far along the path. He saw that many of them merely sat in a daze where she placed them, quite incapable of taking advantage of their good fortune.

"Who is she?" asked Jophan.

"She comes from a now almost extinct tribe known as Fillips," said the Neofan absently. He had been swinging

the stone in his right hand and now flung it with great force towards the crest of the mountains. He and Jophan watched it spin over the heads of the dwarfs and disappear from view.

"You missed," said Jophan.

"It was not a missile," explained the Neofan patiently, "but a missive. A message to the Headeaters who control the giants. It is important to propitiate them, for they are by far the most important tribe in Fandom. Indeed, there is a tradition that on their existence depends that of Trufandom itself."

"If that is so," said Jophan, impressed, "your work is obviously of the greatest importance, and I should like to help if I may. My name is Jophan, and I am, of course, on my way to Trufandom to find the Magic Mimeograph and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

"My name is Letterax," said the other cordially, "and I am delighted to make your acquaintance." With these words he gave Jophan a small axe, similar to his own, and they composed several messages to the Headeaters.⁴

When the last of these had disappeared into the mountains Jophan spoke reflectively to Letterax.

"Since these mountains surround Trufandom on all sides," he pointed out, "it occurs to me that it would be quite as easy to send the messages from Trufandom as from here. Should we not continue our journey?"

Letterax looked doubtful. "Do so if you wish," he said, "but I have several more messages I want to write. I shall follow you later."

Privately Jophan doubted if the Neofan would ever stir from his peaceful existence in the cave, but he expressed the hope of seeing him again

in Trufandom and wished him a cordial farewell. Then, having generously replenished Letterax's skimpy supply of Egg o' Bu, he started on the last stage of his journey to Trufandom.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN REACHES THE END OF HIS JOURNEY

By the use of care and discretion, Jophan was able to evade the blind rages of the giants, and he found his shield an infallible protection against the malice of the dwarfs. Thus he emerged from the danger area unscathed, and soon reached the head of the Canyon. He now found himself on a pleasant, flower-decked path leading gently upwards to a pass between the mountains. The sky in that direction was tinged with a warm golden glow, and at the sight he quickened his pace, for he knew that the glow could come only from Trufandom.

However, the path was longer than it had seemed, and the sun set before he had reached the summit. Regretfully he decided that he had better pass the night where he was. The grass beside the path was soft and the night was warm and pleasant, but Jophan found great difficulty in going to sleep. Borne on the mild breeze he heard the faint sound of happy voices coming from Trufandom, and they filled him with impatience to complete his journey.

Next morning he was on his way at the first hint of light in the sky, and as dawn broke he had almost reached the summit of the pass. Gasping, he ran the last few hundred yards and flung himself down on the ground to drink in the beauty of the scene which lay before him.

Bathed in the mysterious, golden light of early dawn lay the fair land of Trufandom. Only its hills and spires were picked out by the questing rays of the sun, for the country was a sunken plateau ringed on all sides by mountains, so that it formed a secluded world of its own. A more wonderful one Jophan could not have imagined. Beautiful as it was, however, his eye was caught and held by the most wonderful thing of all. It was a tall, white tower which rose out of the rolling parkland, and soared into the sky. On the summit something glittered like a tiny sun.

This, he knew, must be the Tower of Trufandom—and on its top the Enchanted Duplicator!

All eagerness, he started down the grassy slope. He had taken but a few cautious steps when the thought came to him that here his Shield of Umor might have other uses than as a means of defense. Smiling happily to himself, he put the shield on the ground and used it as a toboggan.

Thus Jophan sailed gaily down into Trufandom.

At the foot of the slope he again took up his shield, now shining more brilliantly than ever before, and strode through the leafy lanes in the direction of the Tower. On either side of him were numerous parks and gardens, great and small, and of varying types of beauty, and in them walked shining, godlike figures who he knew to be Trufans. Now and again one of them would notice Jophan, and come to greet him and wish him well, and with each encounter his eagerness grew to reach the Tower and become one of their number.

So it was that late in the afternoon Jophan came at last to the Tower.

There was a spiral staircase inside, and without hesitation he began to climb it. Up and up he went, round and round, higher and higher, long after he thought he should have reached the top. But the Tower was higher than he realized, and he was giddy and out of breath when at last he reached the head of the stairs. Above him now there was only a short ladder leading to a trapdoor.

Jophan sat on the stairway for a while until his dizziness had passed, and he had regained his breath. Then he climbed up the ladder and pushed at the trapdoor. It swung open easily, on a concealed counterbalance. Above him was the blue sky.

Though he had come so far, and braved so many dangers for this moment, his heart almost failed him now that his goal was at hand. But at last, pulling himself together, he stepped quickly up the ladder and onto the roof.

He was on the very top of the Tower. Far beneath him was spread out all the Land of Trufandom as far as the now distant mountains. The top of the Tower was a sheet of burnished gold, and in the center was a cube of solid gold. On the cube there stood a mimeograph.

At the sight of it Jophan felt a sickness in the stomach, and his legs almost failed to support him. Whitefaced, he stared at the mimeograph. He had expected a gleaming, jewel-like machine. Instead he saw a rusty, battered hulk. The framework was filthy with ink, the drum was caked, and there was obviously something wrong with the self-feed. It squatted on the gleaming, gold cube, an obscene eye-sore.

Jophan tried to pull himself together,

telling himself there must be some mistake. But there was nothing else on the roof, just the trapdoor through which he had come, the gold cube, and the old mimeograph. Dazed by the shock of his disappointment, he wandered aimlessly across the top of the Tower.

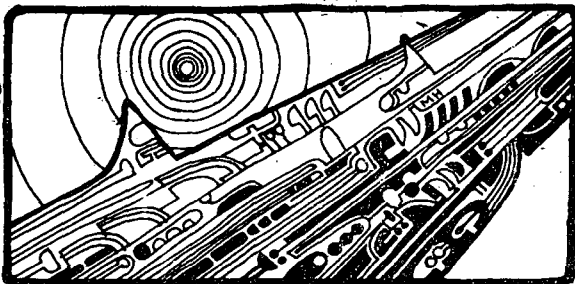
As he did so his hand brushed against the handle of the mimeograph, and something like an electric shock coursed through his body. Amazed, he took a firm grip of the handle. A current of some potent force seemed to flow between him and the machine, feeding back and forth from one to the other until Jophan felt every particle of his being suffused with a strange new life. The mimeograph had also changed. There was no difference in its outward appearance, but he knew that the potent force had also taken possession of it. It was subtly changed, as if it had been dead and was now alive. The handle seemed to throb in his hand. Still uncomprehending, Jophan looked down at his own body. His skin was glowing with the same golden radiance he had noticed in the bodies of the Trufans. His limbs were being invested with the same godlike strength.

As the revelation came to him, there was a sound of golden trumpets in the air, and he heard again the voice of the Spirit of Fandom.

"Yes, Jophan," it said, "you are now a True Fan; and it is yourself that has made you so, as it must be. And now you realize the second great truth—that this is indeed The Magic Mimeograph, and it will produce The Perfect Fanzine. For—" and now the song of the trumpets filled the air, ringing across Trufandom to the far mountains—

"FOR THE MAGIC MIMEOGRAPH IS THE
(Cont. on page 114)

the Future in Books



Doris Lessing: *BRIEFING FOR A DESCENT INTO HELL*. Bantam, N.Y., 1972. 278 pages, \$1.50 pb.

L. Lewin, ed.: *THE DIFFUSION OF SUFI IDEAS IN THE WEST*. Keysign Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1972. 212 pages, \$2.85 pb.

The closest approach of objective and subjective fiction is in stories of madness. Symbols of the outerness of things—the institution, the psychiatrist, the details of treatment—are pitted against symbols of the innerness of things—the patient's fantasies. In most such stories, like Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, the fantasies are abandoned and a precarious sanity is won. In Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell*, the fantasies are abandoned—but this is seen as a sad surrender. Lessing endorses her protagonist's fantasies. "They are the most serious things she can imagine. Like any good sf writer, her sympathies are with her fantasy and not with objective opinion."

Lessing has run with science fiction before. Her major work is a long semi-autobiographical novel sequence, *Children of Violence*. In the early books, Lessing's character, Martha Quest, like Lessing, leaves a Rhodesian farm for the city, marriage, Communism, divorce and exile in England. But the last volume, *The Four-Gated City*, passes beyond the summary of

a present life to peer at the future. It discovers near future holocaust. But the book seems not so much influenced by science fiction as an independent vision, parallel to sf novels of the Fifties like Wilson Tucker's *The Long Loud Silence* and Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, but written a few years later. Like them, it draws an inevitable line from the present into the future and finds disaster lurking near. That is, Lessing's intuition is that a continuation of present objective behavior means subjective disaster.

Since she is convinced of the disaster of objectivity, Lessing's further step toward subjectivity in *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* seems natural. Lessing is following in parallel the same course that modern sf followed in the Sixties. But Lessing shows no familiarity with modern sf, even though she shares its conclusions. Her fantasies do not use contemporary sf symbols.

SF symbols are a powerful vocabulary. If Lessing knew them, she could put them to good use. As it is, she adapts, invents improvises the symbols of her fantasy passages. Sometimes she does it with great success. Sometimes less.

On one reading, I'm not sure whether the book hangs together or not. But I will read it again soon to try to be sure. And maybe yet again. It is brilliant. It is well-written. It is gorgeously varied. It has much to offer a science fiction audience.

Briefing for a Descent Into Hell is in-

fluenced by Sufism. I came to read about the Sufis through a strangely phrased review of nine books written or edited by Idries Shah that was published in the May 7, 1972 *New York Times* and entitled, "What Looks Like an Egg and Is an Egg?" The first of these books that I read was also elliptically phrased, but quite impressive.

The review was by Doris Lessing. The books reviewed were so unusual and made such an impact upon me that I soon took it upon myself to read her latest novel, which was *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell*. I enjoyed it. I admired parts of it tremendously. I did not completely solve it. And I did see the mark of Sufic influence.

The Sufis have the reputation of being Islamic mystics. They themselves claim not to be bound by any culture, any religion, any doctrine, any book, any practice, any expression. If they were Islamic mystics, that is never all that they were—they included kings, generals, poets, theologians, builders, artisans and apparently ordinary people. They claim to be a method. They are a Way.

I cannot say of my own knowledge that they are. As far as I know, I have never met a Sufi. But a consistent strange mode of thought, different from any that I have ever encountered, does run through their work. The Sufis think faster than I do. They think wider, deeper, better and clearer. The books by Shah that Lessing reviewed have proven to be a mirror. The more they are stared into, the more they reveal. What is more, the very act of wrestling with these books has generated more useful thought than any other encounter of my adult life. I believe they were designed to do this. They reveal as much as a reader is prepared to understand.

Very little factual information in these books is presented in a conventional linear manner. It has to be picked up bit by bit and assembled by the reader in his own way, in much the same manner that a beginning reader of sf must pick up the vocabulary of science fiction on the fly, as he reads. The one book that I have encountered that is

most explicit about the nature and shape of present-day Sufi activities is an anthology entitled *The Diffusion of Sufi Ideas in the West*. It is published in hardcover and paperback editions by a firm in Boulder, Colorado employing means of production very like those used in Advent books during the Fifties. That is, the least expensive and most amateurish possible.

But, yet, this book is, as nearly as I can tell, completely genuine. It is consistent with the information in other books. It has the characteristic Sufic thought signature.

The first part of the book includes an article on the Sufis by Doris Lessing that was published in *Vogue* in 1971; the transcript of a program on Idries Shah, the current exemplar of the Sufis, that was broadcast on the BBC; and a long account of a visit to Shah's English home. There is more material here on the current activities of Sufism in the Western world than about Shah himself, whom Robert Graves describes as a "fugleman": "the old army term for the soldier who stood in front of a company on the parade ground as an exemplar in arms-drill." That is, if Shah is represented as deciphering Egyptian music unheard for 3500 years, writing prize-winning films, writing uniquely well in a number of veins, directing an organization called The Institute for Cultural Research, doing original anthropological research, and directing businesses in carpets, publishing and electronics, we are to see it as a demonstration of possibility, not the unique and special accomplishment of one man in his forties.

The second part of the book consists of sample Sufi study material. This is more like the material in Shah's own books than anything else in *The Diffusion of Sufi Ideas*. It sets the mind wandering in strange paths.

The third part of the book is twelve accounts of encounters by Westerners with Sufi manifestations in the Middle East and Central Asia. These look quite different from the accounts in the first part of this book—but the mode of thought is the same.

It takes a stretch of mind to see the consistency that can encompass the range of this book, and to see what binds *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* and *The Diffusion of Sufi Ideas in the West*. But the Sufis seem to be in the business of stretching minds. They say they are evolutionary in nature, and I believe they are.

John Campbell used to editorialize about the hidden supermen among us. I suspect that they do exist, but that they are not the readers of *Analog* after all.

—Alexei Panshin

Joseph Green: *THE MIND BEHIND THE EYE*. DAW Books, New York, 1972. Paperback, 191 pages, 95¢.

This is one of the first of the new line of SF books being published by Don Wollheim. The publisher promises to print quality SF novels and collections that are entirely new and original, with no editions previously published in paperback.

The Mind Behind The Eye had been published (hardback) in England in 1971, but was not available in this country.

SF is a field that always appreciates new ideas, fanciful theories, and original thinking. In *The Mind Behind The Eye*, Green has blended all of these elements into a fast-moving adventure. He has produced a protagonist, Albert Golderson, who prefers to be known simply as "Gold", who is one of two genetically engineered super-brains in the entire world. He is successfully portrayed as a bored, intellectual dilettante, filthy rich and obnoxious beyond the normal sense of the word. Gold is a compelling anti-hero with whom the reader identifies despite the character's undesirable traits.

The actual plot is a mixture of *Gulliver's Travels* and wildly original SF:

the Earth is being invaded by a race of giants (300 feet tall) from a distant star system. Once every several years a fleet of starships bombard the atmosphere with biological viruses designed only to eradicate human life. The time is in the near future when Earth's technology is proficient enough to counteract each attack with anti-viral vaccines; but not strong enough to launch starships to ward off the invaders. During an alien attack, one of their scout ships crashes on the moon, and the men of Earth capture the lone survivor. The massive body is kept alive in a huge underground hangar beneath a base on the moon where Earth's scientists engage upon an outrageous plan.

The alien's brain has been severely damaged, but his body is relatively intact. This allows the scientists to remove the entire left half of the cerebrum and install a large computer and manual control system with a complex console that will allow a human operator to live inside the brain cavity and control the alien body. Such a task required the resources of a super-man such as Gold.

Gold learns to operate the huge body like a robot, while a young female assistant remains in the operator's quarters to maintain proper bodily functions by means of electronic and chemical control. The author handles this thesis quite well by answering most of the technical, as well as practical, questions that would arise in such an arrangement. The chamber in the skull also contains living quarters and supplies to keep the two humans alive for up to five years.

When the operation of the alien is finally mastered, Gold arranges to have the body rescued by the next attacking fleet of aliens as they pass the planet Mars. It is hoped that Gold will be able

to carry on a charade with the aliens, causing them to think that he has suffered brain damage from the crash and will require rehabilitation on the home world. It is during this rehabilitation that Gold hopes to learn of the alien's language, culture, and purposes for attempting to destroy mankind.

Most of this is accomplished without any problems and the scenes are handled adequately by Green. What transpires after the Alien/Gold being reaches the invaders' home planet is the major content of the novel. There is, however, a telegraphed happy ending, although there are many tense moments, including the final scene where Gold undergoes a meaningful learning experience about himself.

There are several subplots woven into this novel, and they raise it above the elementary adventure-novel level. There is an effort to depict through flashback the precarious childhood of Gold as a protected, neurotic, *homo superior*. This method serves well to illustrate Gold's odd character and confused state of existence. There is an element of street-corner psychology to explain many of his problems, but it can be overlooked when the novel is taken as a whole. Another subplot is the odd relationship between Gold and the female assistant with whom he spends over four years in the alien's skull. There is also a look into the strange and attractive culture of the aliens and a didactic lesson from their timeless mythology which serves to tie together all of the subplots.

Mr. Green could have expanded this novel into a larger work without much difficulty. The reason I say this is because of the relatively quick resolution at the end of the book (less than 30 pages), which serves to compress the impact and credulity of the ending.

Green's style is sure-handed and lucid. There is little evidence of overwriting, except in the beginning chapters. There are many portions of the book which employ complex scientific explanations, and I am not sufficiently versed in the various fields to know whether Mr. Green is being valid in his explanations or pulling off a ploy of A. E. van Vogt, i.e. overwhelming the reader with a flood of scientific mish-mash, hoping the reader will simply swallow it.

As I said previously, the plot and its many ramifications are wildly original and certainly urge the reader to "suspend his disbelief", which is one of the primary aims of good SF. For the price, it's a novel that the reader can get into in a hurry, and, while enjoying the adventure, speculate on its possibilities.

—Thomas F. Monteleone

Mark S. Geston: *THE DAY STAR*, DAW Books, New York, 1972, Paperback, 126 pages, \$95.

In order to appreciate this novel to its fullest extent, it would benefit the reader to have read Geston's two previous novels, *The Lords of the Starship* and *Out of the Mouth of the Dragon*. I say this for several reasons. The author writes with a very distinctive style that is both daring and complex in its bold imagery and strange symbolism. Secondly, Geston's first two novels used the setting of an earth of the far future where man has degenerated into quasi-feudal city-states, where the secrets of technology are known only to the privileged, where ignorance, poverty, and strife are the accepted way of life. He has written of armageddons, of strange legends and self-fulfilling

prophecies wrapped in myths. And he has done this while weaving strong, portentous moods through his characters, his settings, and his readers.

The Day Star is somewhat of a sequel to the previous novels in that it concerns the same far-distant earth. The perceptive reader will pick up names of places and characters that have appeared in both of the earlier novels. It is the story of a young boy named Thel who collaborates with a ghostly ancestor (the reader is never quite sure if the ancestor is, in fact, a ghost, or whether he is a symbolic abstraction signifying man's innate, driving will to power and knowledge) called Pagent. The odd pair team up to travel across a battle-scarred world of desolate cities and dreary lives to rediscover the glory of a legendary civilization that was based in a city called Ferrin.

Basically it is a "trek story," and the plot of the novel is wrapped over this thin frame. Gradually it becomes a series of mini-adventures of the boy and the man/ghost/abstraction as they travel the ruins of the Continental Highway—the remains of an artery that once led to Ferrin and linked it with the rest of the world. The plot is weak and in no way original or stimulating; it is just a device which Geston uses to spin his webs of symbolism and thought-provoking legends.

But somehow, this doesn't matter, and I found my self becoming completely wrapped up in the mystical world of Thel and Pagent. The reason being Geston's total mastery of words and images. He literally takes command of the reading experience and

matter-of-factly states impossible or improbable or incomprehensible situations with such power and control that the reader has no choice but to marvel, nod his head, and then calmly accept.

What I mean by this is actually quite simple. Geston's novels are so interesting and so gripping because I can never really be sure if I can accept what is being said on face value. I am never really sure if the language he uses is literal or figurative. In *The Day Star*, he speaks of "the time wind" which whimsically blows on different parts of this different earth. It is a wind of strange and varying properties (which Geston never bothers to explain or make clear) that eats at men, taking away, second by second, their lives. At other times, the wind is a cloak, protecting whoever walks in it from aging at all. The time wind carries memories of past eras of greatness, and when the characters experience this strange property, they seem to be able to see into the past and relive events of history.

And then there is the "day star" itself, also an odd, almost mystical object. Geston speaks of it so ethereally that I was never actually sure *what* it was. He tells of legends about the scientists of Ferrin who built a great device that emits an enormous amount of energy and light. It is called the Day Star, and it seems to have had the ability of bestowing, among other things, eternal life, great knowledge, peace, order, and most important of all, freedom from Chaos.

Geston capitalizes Chaos because he has personified the word into a roving pack of nightmare visions and beasts

that inhabit the world of his future earth. In one brilliant passage, where Thel and Pagent encounter Chaos, Geston likens it to a vast, dark storm that swarms over the land spreading vileness, putrescence, and evil. It is a frightening, yet beautiful description—unreal and at the same time *very* real.

But the legend goes on to say that the Day Star collapsed because of unforeseen problems and Ferrin was destroyed by the tremendous flood of Chaos that returned to the world as the Day Star flickered out. Thel and Pagent wish to know what happened to Ferrin, and with that mythical city, mankind.

The novel's resolution is actually no surprise, and I don't think it was intended to be. It is rather cyclic, giving the reader a feeling of order and permanence in the world. Thus the *Day Star* is a novel of learning and of lessons. Geston plays god in his original little world, which he describes through the metaphor of a nautilus shell. Time and man, he says, slowly wind their way through the seemingly infinite spirals of the shell.

The book is filled with symbols and parable-like examples which the reader can easily recognize, but has trouble in deciphering. Each chapter seems to close by asking more questions, posing more problems than are ever answered or resolved. But all this is done on purpose, I think. It is the intention of Geston to be vague, to be indistinct. By writing in this fashion he leaves the reader with alternate conclusions, by which different people will feel different emotions from his prose. Geston

doesn't let me know any more than his characters do about the strange things that they witness.

It's very short—not even really novel length—but there is plenty of meaning and thought in those 126 pages. It's not the type of book that I would recommend to someone who wants a few hours of light reading. In fact, it would be far better enjoyed and understood, if you can read his other two novels first—they help to establish the mood and power that Geston uses so effectively.

—Thomas F. Monteleone

Robert E. Briney and Edward Wood: *SF BIBLIOGRAPHIES: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BIBLIOGRAPHICAL WORKS ON SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY FICTION*. Advent, Chicago, 1972. 49 pages, \$1.95 pb.

Thomas Clareson: *SCIENCE FICTION CRITICISM: AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST*. Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio, 1972. 225 pages, \$7 hb.

These books are not for the casual reader. Nonetheless, there will be those who will want them, they will have their uses, they were inevitable, and it is good to see them show up.

On the face of it, these books are much alike. Both are annotated lists of works connected to science fiction. *SF Bibliographies* by Briney and Wood is a bibliography of science fiction bibliographies. Under four categories—Magazine Indexes, Bibliographies of Individual Authors, General Indexes and Checklists, and Foreign Language Bibliographies—the authors list such works as "An Index to the British Editions of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*", "A Checklist of Poul Anderson", "Checklist of Ace S-F Through 1968", and "Beitraege zur Geschichte und Bibliographie der Utopischen und Phantastischen

Literatur". They admit they are weakest on foreign language bibliographies. The annotations indicate the scope of the works. If you need to find complete information about one or another aspect of the sf that has been published, this is the place to find out where to look.

Science Fiction Criticism by Clareson is an annotated bibliography of sf criticism. This is a much larger job than the one undertaken by Briney and Wood, but it has been done less well. It may have been necessary to limit the scope of the enterprise in this first attempt at establishing bibliographic control of the sf criticism that has been written. But it probably was not the best possible decision to include books and general magazine and scholarly journal material and exclude almost completely criticism originating in the professional sf magazines and the sf fan magazines. It is understandable of Clareson to plead that this material is not within his chosen purview, but it has meant that his book in large part is a collection of careful annotations of uninformed opinion. There are plans to issue supplements at regular intervals, so some of the holes that it presently leaves, if not these major ones, will be filled in time.

The book has one other flaw. It is over-organized. Material is divided into nine arbitrary categories. Rather than placing fundamentally like material together, they seem to divide it. One alphabetical list might have been more useful. This feeling is perhaps accentuated by the lack of running headlines at the top of the page. It is impossible to tell at any moment in which list you are lost.

However, if you seek to know what has been said about science fiction, this is a place to look to discover where some of it has been said and Clareson's impression of its thesis.

In one sense, each of these books is typical of its source of origin. The Briney and Wood is a book by two of the proprietors of a publishing company owned by fans, intended for an audience of collectors and readers. It leads to lists of sf books and stories. The Clareson is a book by an academic, issued

through an academic publisher, intended for an academic audience. It leads to studies of science fiction, and studies of studies of science fiction. It will be an aid to the man seeking to write a thesis on the critical response to Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell*. Briney and Wood will be more useful to academics with interest in science fiction than Clareson will be to fans of science fiction.

It is commentary on contemporary sf that people care to keep this kind of control of it. The academics seem convinced that there is an object for study here. Well, perhaps there is. The Fans seem convinced that their love will be justified. Well, perhaps it will.

—Alexei Panshin

Cordwainer Smith: *STARDREAMER*, Beagle Books 95127; New York, 1971, 185 pp. Paperback, 95¢

The late Paul Myron Linebarger—who wrote under the name of Cordwainer Smith—is without doubt one of the best sf writers who ever lived. His stories have a soaring mythic power, a wealth of intense creative imagination, and especially a strong feeling of alien *strangeness* that few other writers have been able to duplicate. His series, the Lords of Instrumentality (to which nearly all of his science fiction works belong), surpasses even *The Foundation Trilogy* in scope, complexity, and overall inventiveness.

Unfortunately, *Stardreamer* is not a very good introduction to Smith's work; it is a relatively minor collection containing the few remaining Smith stories which had not yet appeared in book form. There is only one truly major story in the bunch: "Under Old Earth." That this book is worth purchasing for that story alone is but a small indication of Smith's skill.

"Under Old Earth" is about the dying Lord Sto Oiden, one of the Lords of Instrumentality, who takes a journey down to the Gebiet and Bezirk, the forbidden areas under the earth. There he encounters the

Sunboy, a former gambler, who has broken free from the controls of the Instrumentality. He is performing a mad, hypnotic dance under the influence of the metal congohelium and the sinister Douglas-Ouyang planets ("strange worlds, where stars dance dances wilder than any dance conceived by man . . . planets which have a consciousness in common, but perhaps not intelligence . . .") This story contains one of the major themes that runs through much of Smith's fiction: the idea that in order to be happy, people must be sad. In order to be truly human, people must be both. Lord Sto Oiden's journey is in part a way of proving this idea to the other Lords of the Instrumentality. One of the last lines of the story is "In later centuries she brought disease, risk, and misery back to increase the happiness of man." A lovely, paradoxical notion—and completely characteristic of Smith.

Part of the appeal of this story—and all of Smith's best work—also lies in Smith's odd use of language, and his fondness for strange rhymes and verse. Even the titles of such stories as "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard" and "The Burning of the Brain" reveal this inclination. Much of the evocative alien strangeness of Smith's stories is derived from this eccentric use of language. Even the verse contributes to this effect. Take for instance this piece from the beginning of "Under Old Earth": "I need a temporary dog/For a temporary job/On a temporary place/Like Earth!" There is no rhyme to this verse, but none is needed; repeat it several times, and it still becomes quite infectious. Like all of Smith's constructions, it has a weird, poetic logic all its own.

The verse is also perhaps significant for some of the references it contains. For instance, "temporary dog" undoubtedly refers to the animal-derived underpeople who are common in many of Smith's stories (and this one as well). The underpeople are not regarded as real human beings by most of the people on Old Earth, and are treated with contempt; they are also killed off at the slightest excuse, which is what the adjective

"temporary" connotes. "Temporary dog" might be a slang term for an underperson. The "temporary" repeated in the other lines might be a way of emphasizing the idea that everything is temporary, nothing lasts forever, and we should view things accordingly. But this is just conjecture—like all of Smith's writings, the true meaning shall probably always remain partially obscured, mysterious, and this is yet another one of his attractions.

Three other stories from Smith's Lords of the Instrumentality series are in *Stardreamer*. "The Crime and Glory of Commander Suzdal" (from AMAZING), is a much more simple tale than "Under Old Earth." It is about a group of colonists on the planet Arachosia who have lost all their female members due to some type of radiation from the sun, which causes cancer through interaction with the female hormones. They are forced to reproduce artificially, and gradually the whole notion of an "opposite sex" becomes repugnant and unnatural to them. "Their science, their art and their music moved forward with strange lurches of inspired neurotic genius, because they lacked the fundamentals in the human personality itself, male and female, the family, the operations of love, of hope . . . they had become monsters and did not know it." The colonists resolve to attack Earth and the Instrumentality if they get a chance, and they lure Commander Suzdal to their planet with a false distress signal.

This lack of "fundamentals in the human personality itself" with which the story is concerned is very similar to the lack of balance between happiness and sadness brought out in "Under Old Earth." Again, Smith is saying that in order to be truly human, one must have both: male and female, happiness and sadness. One cannot exist without the other. However, while in "Under Old Earth" this idea is a very subtle undercurrent, in "Suzdal" it is rammed down the reader's throat. This blatant obviousness is one of the story's major failures.

"Think Blue, Count Two" is set in the

time before plano-forming, when great ships flew across space using large sails pushed by starlight for propulsion. One of the most difficult jobs in assessing this story—and many of Smith's other works—is determining when his characters are acting awkwardly, unnaturally, and when they are simply acting *strangely*: in an alien but logical fashion. The borderline is not always easy to decide; for who knows how people in the far distant future, with different motivations, different feelings and emotions than we have, will act?

I think Smith's characters in "Think Blue, Count Two," tend to act more awkwardly than alienly, however; they often seem more like puppets pulled by the author's strings than real people. There is a series of rather contrived "visits" near the end of the story where this is brought out most clearly. It has been said that technology is often used as a justification for a *deus ex machina* in an sf story (in the pulp magazines, the hero could do anything he wanted with 'the right gadget'), and Smith also uses it as a justification for these "visits." In all, the story is very disappointing.

"When the People Fell" is simpler, and not much better. It leads off with a striking image, however: "Can you imagine a rain of people through the acrid fog? Can you imagine thousands and thousands of human bodies, without weapons, overwhelming unconquerable monsters. Can you—?" The story is about the migration of the "Chinensians" to Venus, and is one of the earliest stories in the Instrumentality series. Smith avoids the standard cliché of picturing Venus as one giant, water covered world, and this story also retains many of the gentle, fairy-tale like qualities of his earlier stories, which most of his later works lack. It is passable.

The four other stories in this collection are among the few sf works Smith wrote that weren't part of his Lords of the Instrumentality series. While the stories discussed above are interesting, whatever their faults, for the way in which they fit into Smith's

magnificent vision of the future, these other, non-connected stories must stand alone. And for the most part they are rather poor. The one exception is "Western Science is So Wonderful." This a delightful, humorous story about an exiled Martian who wants to become a Chinese Communist, and it displays a lot of the same inventiveness Smith used for a more serious purpose in his other stories.

Many of people have wondered why Paul Myron Linebarger choose to hide his identity behind a pseudonym, and why he kept his contact with other sf writers and editors to a minimum. Various explanations have been offered, but I think that Linebarger wanted the aura of legend and mystery that surrounded the name of "Cordwainer Smith" to grow, and evolve, until it became as mysterious and enigmatic as the stories he wrote.

And it has, you know.

—Cy Chauvin

Clifford D. Simak: A CHOICE OF GODS, Putnam, New York, 1972, Hardback, 187 pages, \$1.49 (SF Book Club edition).

The inside jacket of this book practically tells the entire tale in about 250 words, but since it is a story told by Clifford Simak, it makes no difference at all. Simak's work, from his shortest story up to his novels, is generally imbued with rich characterization, human feeling, and intellectual depth. *A Choice of Gods* tells of the Earth thousands of years from the present as it is inhabited by several small bands of humans. The rest of the planet's billions disappeared in one night, vanishing from the face of the Earth. Legend says that the majority of the population didn't just vanish, but was *taken away*, leaving only some of North America's plains Indians, a small family called the Whitneys, and the thousands of robots that had served the masses of mankind like the slaves of other ages.

The Indians have survived the disappearance of humanity by reverting back to

their old ways. As the centuries turn into millenia, the Earth returns to it natural verdant, fresh condition, and the Indians can again live in touch with the Earth. Simak weaves their culture and their simple, pleasant philosophies throughout the novel, thus creating a pastoral setting that pervades the entire book.

After the disappearance, those few humans who are left discover that they now live for many many centuries, instead of years, and that it has become common to live for several thousand years. This new ability gives the characters remarkable insight into themselves, especially the family of the Whitneys, through which the whole story is told.

As the centuries pass, the survivors of Earth gain immense powers of telepathy and telekinesis which eventually lead to the ability to actually teleport themselves instantaneously anywhere in the galaxy. The people who travel about the galaxy are called star-rovers, and they have devoted their long lives to further exploration of the universe.

Also, as time passes, all of the Earth's robot's band together in the construction of a strange project—the erection of massive structure on a plain below the Indian settlement. The end product of the project becomes a major factor at the end of the novel.

One day, one of the star-rovers returned to Earth with shocking news—after almost 5,000 years, the people of the earth have been located, flourishing on three planets near the center of the galaxy. The Whitney family is happy to receive the news that Earth's billions have survived, but the Indians show complete disinterest. But there is also bad news—the exiled people of earth have perfected starship travel and are planning to return to the earth and reclaim it for their own use.

Clifford Simak takes this simple straightforward plot and uses it to expound on his ideas of nature, politics, ecology, and religion. There are many long passages of dialogue between the main character, Jason

Whitney, and the chief of the Indian nation, Red Cloud. These dialogues are just veiled pretenses for Simak to idly roam in and out of various philosophical avenues. But the dialogue is in no way a digression, because Simak skillfully inserts aspects of the plot into every paragraph so that the intellectual conceits do not become tiresome.

The tale comes to a somewhat predictable conclusion that I suppose could be called "happy," for want of a better term. But it is not the ending that keeps the reader interested in this book. It does not lead up to any frightful climax, nor are there many real "action" scenes in the entire book. Instead, the novel seems to flow like a smooth, only slightly turbulent river. In its general overall impact *A Choice of Gods* reminded me very strongly of *City*, the earlier classic by Simak. The writing is very similar, evoking thoughtful concepts and weaving them into sensitive, and sometimes emotional writing.

Simak's characters always seem to be at peace with themselves. In this novel, it is Jason Whitney who views the world through aged eyes, tempered by the wisdom of experience. He does not allow himself to become riled by the lower passions, preferring instead to let his reason rule. This type of character seems to keep re-occurring in Simak's work, and I am reminded of his two recent shorter works, both of which were in the running for Hugos over the past two years—*The Thing in The Stone* and *The Autumn Land*—both of which had characters that fit into the naturalist-philosopher mold.

The best way to describe Simak's writing is to say that he is compassionate. By identifying with his characters, the reader is able to feel and emote, to be able to understand why the complexities of our environment will crush down unless we maintain a selective and watchful eye to our more simple, basic origins. This seems to be the theme of *A Choice of Gods*. It doesn't really matter what role man chooses to play in life, for the outcome will always be the same if he remains a moral being—a rational being.

There is no room for chaos in Simak's world-view. In order for something to be evil, it must first be dissected and examined; it must be understood. And then, says Simak, when these things are done, we may come to know that there are very few *evil* things in nature—there is usually purpose in all things, no matter how bizarre or evil they may first appear to be.

This is the crux of *A Choice of Gods* and the trademark of Simak's mastery. He never

fails to show the reader the many facets of a situation or problem. He always takes the time to ensure understanding by the reader. This novel is a subtle, but very intense exploration into the purpose of man's existence, his future, and his philosophy. If you have enjoyed Simak's recent work, or the type of thing he was doing with the old *City* stories, you will enjoy *A Choice of Gods*.

—Thomas F. Monteleone

Club House (Cont. from page 103)

ONE WITH A TRUE FAN AT THE HANDLE."

And Jophan found that it was so . . .

—BOB SHAW & WALT WILLIS

NOTES

¹Egoboo is the true medium of exchange in fandom. Literally: an ego-boost. When one's fanzine or writing or artwork is well-received, one receives egoboo. Most fans will admit, when pressed, that egoboo is their real reward for their fan activity.

²A sense of humor is all that's needed to ward off brickbats.

³The references here are to the fan scene in the early fifties, when every fanzine published fanzine reviews (many still do), and a good number of professional magazines also reviewed fanzines. Quite often the reviews were critical in a petty sense, completely demolishing the fragile egos of neofans whose heads had been swelled by egoboo from their neofan peers and who had no real taste of criticism.

The dwarfs are the fanzine critics, the giants reviewers for the professional sf magazines. Most of the latter were not terribly knowledgeable about fandom or fanzines; they were editorial assistants or the like to whom the fanzine reviews were assigned. Among them however were Rog Phillips (Roger Phillips Graham), who launched *The Clubhouse* here in 1947 and whose reviews broadened in perceptivity with experience—and his wife, Mari Wolff (Graham), who reviewed fanzines in *Fandora's Box*, a column in a now-defunct sf magazine, *Imagination*. Mari had a reputation for doling out egoboo to every fanzine she reviewed with indiscriminate abandon. This reputation was not entirely undeserved. Later, toward the end of *Imagination's* career, Robert Bloch took over the column and improved it immensely.

⁴Letterax is a prozine letterhack—someone who makes a practice of writing letters to the professional sf magazines, and whose letters are regularly published therein. At one time every sf magazine (and there were more than a score) had a lengthy lettercolumn, and letterhacking to the prozines was an acceptable form of fan activity, although many fans considered it only a sideline or a way-station on the way into Trufandom. For some, however, it was a major aspect of fan activity, and many fans first established themselves as Big Names by letterhacking the prozines of the forties. The practice died in the fifties, along with most of the prozine lettercolumns.

The Headeaters are the prozine editors—mythical-figures within fandom then—and at that time the prozines' lettercolumns and fanzine review columns were considered indispensable in introducing new blood to fandom. Indeed, when both features virtually disappeared from the prozines in the late fifties (and some feared the prozines themselves would soon be extinct), it was widely held that fandom would collapse upon itself and die of attrition. This did not happen; fandom had become self-sustaining (always granted that science fiction itself survived in some form) and continued to grow in size despite the lack of the traditional avenues of access. Thus the "tradition" that Trufandom depended for its existence on the "Headeaters" was proved false.—TW

Editorial (Cont. from page 4)

White, so you needn't answer this letter personally, just turn it over to anyone else who can answer my questions.

Thank you very much—

Sincerely,
Leah A. Zeldes

I CONSIDERED A PERSONAL REPLY, and then reconsidered. These are questions which many of you must have asked yourselves from time to time. And they deserve a public answer. So let's take them in the order in which they were asked, and supply a few answers.

WHAT IS "FANDOM"? Let's back off from this question for a moment for some historical perspective.

AMAZING was launched in 1926, at a time when the term "science fiction" was unknown (the terms used then were "scientific romances" and "scientification"), and the genre of science fiction did not exist. AMAZING was the world's first sf magazine and its existence defined and refined the genre.

AMAZING's founder, Hugo Gernsback, was uncommonly aware of the value and importance of maintaining communication with his readership and the letter column was an important feature from the magazine's earliest days.

In AMAZING's letter column readers could not only voice their opinions about the stories and format of the magazine, they could also find kindred spirits—fellow readers who shared their intense enthusiasm for this new and stimulating form of fiction. For the first time, people who had privately thrilled to the works of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and such contemporary authors of the period as George Allen England or Edgar Rice Burroughs, because these stories excited their thinking with bursts of new ideas—for the first time these people became aware that they were not alone, not unique in all the world in their passion for sf.

From almost the beginning, letterwriters

to AMAZING included in their comments responses to earlier letters published in the magazine. It was but a short step for some of these readers to initiate private and direct correspondence with each other. And yet one more step for those who lived in the same areas to make personal contact with each other and form clubs. And, in the process, various of these readers—some of them club members, some of them in contact only via correspondence—began to publish amateur magazines for circulation among themselves.

Thus "fandom" was born.

A much more detailed description of this historical evolution of sf fandom can be found in Sam Moskowitz' *The Immortal Storm* (unfortunately out of print at the present) and Harry Warner's *All Our Yesterdays* (Advent; \$7.50; available directly from Advent: Publishers Inc., P.O. Box 9228, Chicago, Ill., 60690). Of necessity, I must be less detailed here than the authors of those book-length works were allowed to be.

There is some dispute about the exact dates on which fandom first came into existence and which was the first fanzine. But it is reasonable to say that fandom was in its earliest existence by 1930, and that the first fanzine came out around the same time. By the mid-thirties there could be no doubt. Every major U.S. city had at least one fanclub, and more than a score of fanzines were being published. Yet at that time, the total number of people who considered themselves science fiction fans and participated in fandom must have been only a very few hundred.

Over the years, sf fandom has, inevitably, built up a history of traditions and terminology. "Fandom" is one such specialized term. Originally its use was exclusively ours. In the early 1950's a fandom formed around comics and in the 1960's other so-called "sub-fandoms" were created by monster-movie fans, Tolkien fans, *Star Trek* fans, and other enthusiasts of specialized interests usually associated with sf. Most of these

sub-fandoms use the terminology coined in *SF Fandom* and some members of some sub-fandoms are convinced that theirs was and is the only "real" fandom—that *SF Fandom* is a *johanny-come-lately*. This has caused both amusement and bitterness among some *SF* fans. The term "fandom" is used by each of these fandoms to describe itself, and at least one quasi-underground publication put out by associates of New York pop-artist Andy Warhol calls itself a "fanzine."

WHAT IS A "FANZINE"? By definition, a magazine published by fans, for fans, most fanzines are unpretentious in appearance and nature. The fanzines of the early and mid-thirties were often typeset and printed (by hand) on small letterpresses—usually (but not always) in the editor-publisher's basement. (The cost of commercial printing was low enough at the time that some fans had their publications printed professionally. Bob (Wilson) Tucker remembers saving pennies in the early thirties to have his first fanzine—four small pages—printed by a company whose advertisement he'd found in a newspaper.) Those early fanzines tended to be one of two types: newsletters, often published by and for local clubs, or amateur *SF* magazines which published fiction by fans and some helpful professional authors as well. (Dr. David H. Keller was one professional who was well-known for his generosity with his fiction by the editors of these fanzines.) The latter type of fanzine was occasionally ambitious in nature and appearance; William Crawford, who published the professional *SF* magazine *Spaceways* in the fifties and again, briefly, in the sixties, was responsible for several semi-professional fanzines in the thirties, for example.

By the early forties the favored medium of publication for fanzines had become the mimeograph, and some fans made use of the yet cheaper hectograph (which produces a maximum of about fifty legible copies). As fanzines moved away from set type and the imitation of professional format and ap-

pearance, they also became less the vehicle of amateur science fiction and more hospitable to articles, essays and reviews. This they remain today: publications in which *SF* fans can talk about *SF* and just about anything else they may conceive to be of interest to their readership. The average fanzine is still published for a readership of only a few hundred—running from limited circulations of fifty or less to three or four hundred for most of the better-known "genzines" or general-interest fanzines. A few have exceeded this circulation—*SF Review* had a circulation of well over a thousand and so does *Locus*—but mimeographing and collating more than a few hundred copies of a fanzine is a real chore, and one few fans care to maintain for any length of time.

Fanzines, like most aspects of fandom, are a hobby. Although a few fans have an avowed desire to at least break even financially on their fanzines (and yet fewer have been rumored to make a small profit), most fans regard their fanzines as money-losers and accept the fact. Until about twenty years ago, most fanzines were sold (by subscription) for 10¢ a copy or so. Since most fanzines cost more than 10¢ to print and mail, and fanzine editors usually exchanged fanzines with each other and gave free copies to their contributors, gradually subscriptions fell into disuse. Today the average fanzine can be obtained by a wide variety of means, the most common of which is to write a letter of comment (LoC) upon its receipt.

Why would anyone want to publish a fanzine? Because, like most hobbies, there is something about the process which appeals to many fans. Frustrated or would-be editors have a chance to experiment freely within a microcosm which looks upon such experiments with an open, if not always liberal, mind. The urge is not restricted to *SF* fandom; all "fandoms" have their fanzines and amateur journalism (with privately printed and circulated publications) is itself a hobby which dates back well over one

hundred years.

A great many of the professional sf world's major names found their start in fandom. Harlan Ellison, for example, published *Dimensions* in the mid-fifties—a fanzine which is still regarded by those who knew it with something approaching awe, and in whose cluttered pages an embryonic *Dangerous Visions* can be clearly glimpsed. Robert Silverberg started his *Spaceship* while he was still in his early teens, and established it—before abandoning it for professional writing—as a major name in fanzines. Lee Hoffman, whose western novels are award-winners and have been made into movies, (and whose *Always the Black Knight* was serialized in *FANTASTIC* in 1970) published *Quandry* in the early fifties; that fanzine is now widely regarded as the best and most representative of its era. Bob Shaw and James White were collaborators and co-editors with Walter A. Willis in the latter's *Hyphen*, an Irish fanzine which many feel was one of the best fanzines ever published. Etc. (Modestly, I admit to a considerable career in fanzine publishing of my own, beginning in 1953; I will not claim that mine had a rank and stature equal to those fanzines mentioned above, however.)

WHAT DISTINGUISHES A "FAN" FROM A PROFESSIONAL? Basically, what a professional does for money, a fan does for love.

But of course it isn't really that simple. Unlike most forms of literature, science fiction has always been more the work of "dedicated amateurs" than that of those who earn their living exclusively from writing. The field has never provided sole support for more than a handful of writers, many of whom have not lived in what most would describe as luxury. Most science fiction writers have other, more mundane jobs or careers on which they count to support themselves and their families. They write "on the side," usually in the evenings and on weekends, and almost always because they want to write science fiction and enjoy it—

not because they have to.

I expect this is the result of that same special quality in science fiction which made so many of us fans when we first began reading it: it stimulates our minds and excites us with new ideas. This excitement is no less great for those who write it.

So, if you scratch most professionals in this field, you'll find a fan underneath. Many of today's professionals—like those I mentioned above—have been fans; fandom was for them a stepping-stone, a means by which they were able to develop the talents which they would later put to use in writing and/or editing (or illustrating) science fiction. Some remain fans to this day—Bob Tucker is an outstanding example—simultaneously pursuing a professional career while maintaining their activity in fandom. Other professionals profess a disdain for fandom and fans—but it is clear that their own motivation and involvement in science fiction is essentially "fannish"—they too love sf.

Thus, the dividing line between fan and pro becomes less clear the more closely it is examined. But basically a professional can be defined as someone whose activity in our field is paid for, and a fan as someone who is involved in fandom as a hobby. That both roles can be shared by one person is a matter of historical (and obvious) fact.

WHAT IS A "NEOFAN"? The word is a contraction of "neophyte" and "fan." Quite simply, it means a "new fan." Every fan starts out in fandom as a neofan. It is a stage we've all passed through. A neofan is characterised by his enthusiasm (which is often the product of his youth), his naiveté (he usually conceives a number of sweeping reforms for everything he perceives to be wrong with fandom; in most cases he simply isn't sufficiently aware of fandom's true scope), and the speed with which he ceases to be a neofan (the average "graduation period" from the neofan stage is six months to a year), after which he usually comes to regard his activities as a neofan with at least a tinge of embarrassment.

A great many neofans are young teenagers. This is because most of us discover science fiction somewhere between the ages of eight and twelve, and those of us who are sufficiently excited by sf to make the next transition—into fandom—are still quite young. I've alluded to other former fans' early age of discovery; I was thirteen when I became a fan and Terry Carr (presently the editor of the *Universe* anthology series and a contributor to these magazines upon occasion) was even younger. Both of us made our share of youthful mistakes as neofans; both of us outgrew them, as every neofan must. Because every fan and ex-fan has been through this stage, most are quite tolerant of the neofans they encounter today, and if the phrase "neofan" is sometimes spoken depreciatingly, it is also spoken with the affection of those who have experienced the same stage of youthful folly themselves.

WHAT ARE THE S.F. CONVENTIONS? Who goes to them?

Well, if you've been following my editorials over the last half-year or more, you've undoubtedly formed some opinions on this topic already. I gather reader-Zeldes has not.

Put briefly, a science fiction convention is a gathering of people interested in science fiction. Some of these "cons" are small and informal in nature, intended primarily for fans alone—a chance to remeet old friends and acquaintances. These run from fifty to perhaps four times that number in attendance, meet at a motel (usually, if the season is right, one with a swimming pool), have little or no formal program, and consist of a weekend of open-ended parties.

Others are larger (much larger, in the case of the present-day annual World S.F. Conventions—the "worldcons" about which I've written so much recently), meet in hotels, have formal programs of speeches and panels and sometimes banquets, and usually present a number of the professionals in the field on the program. Their appeal is less to the in-group of fans

than to the average sf reader, who may come to hear Isaac Asimov or Fred Pohl or Harlan Ellison speak on some aspect of current-day sf (or a related topic, like the space program).

Until about a decade ago, there were relatively few conventions—less than half a dozen a year. The best known were the Worldcon (which is held annually in a city picked by Worldcon attendees two years earlier, and is rotated between the east coast, midwest and west coast and to other countries every so often) and three "regional" conventions—the Phillycon (held each November in Philadelphia), the Midwestcon (an informal conference held outside Cincinnati in late June), and the Westercon (a west coast convention which is held over the Fourth of July weekend in a city selected the year before by attendees). However, the late fifties and sixties witnessed an astonishing mushrooming of local or regional conventions and conferences such as the Disclave (Memorial Day weekend in Washington, D.C.), the Lunacon (around Easter in New York City), the Boskone (sometimes twice a year, usually early fall, in Boston), etc. Conventions and conferences are now being held in nearly every major city in the United States at least once a year; New York City is now host to several, put on by different groups and individuals, some of them avowedly for the reason of personal profit.

Until perhaps three or four years ago, sf conventions were put on for largely altruistic reasons; if the convention made a profit it was usually a slim one and the proceeds went into the treasury of the sponsoring club to help finance the next. However, this disdain for economic largess is peculiar to sf fandom (which has always had a tradition of idealism) and is looked upon with something approaching sheer amazement (if not outright contempt) by comics fans and other members of allied sub-fandoms, whose entire social fabric is structured by the profit motive. As these fans began to become interested in putting on conventions—sometimes purely for their own fandom, as with

the New York Comicon; sometimes as 'multiple' cons like the Detroit Triple Fan Fair, which appeal to comics, movie and sf fans—they introduced the profit motive to conventioning. Now it is not unusual to encounter announcements in fanzines and the mail of conventions previously unknown and put on by fans never before heard of, usually with a trumped-up list of attractions (a big-name guest of honor like Harlan Ellison, and a few other "names" whose assent to appear may be conditional at best) and a hefty registration fee. These are usually the result of someone saying to someone else, "Let's make some money. Let's put on a convention!" If you think I am unhappy about this turn of affairs, you're right. Most of these people have little experience in handling the logistics of a convention, and little interest in anything besides lining their pockets. Some of them have nevertheless made a fair success of their conventions, and I have no doubt we'll be seeing more of them and their kind of convention as time goes on. I view this with mild alarm, but I am probably a reactionary and idealistic old fogey.

WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF THE FOREGOING TO READERS OF AMAZING S.F.?

The most optimistic assessment of fandom's number—based more on convention attendance than anything else—is that there are perhaps five thousand people in the world who consider themselves "fans". In more realistic terms, not many more than a thousand are actively involved in, most of the hardcore activities of fandom—club attendance and fanzine reading and publishing, for instance. This magazine sells to thirty times that number and is probably read by an even larger number of people. If you are not a fan, why should you be interested in, or care about sf fandom?

It would be easy to say, quite simply, no reason at all. You've gotten along quite easily without fandom up to now and you don't need it in order to read and enjoy

science fiction.

... Or do you?

The fact is that, for better or worse, what goes on in sf fandom *does* influence the sf you read. Not in a big way, of course—there is no "conspiracy" of fans, such as Norman Spinrad once implied, which "controls" the sf you read. But the traditions and history of sf fandom are inextricably tied to the traditions and history of science fiction, at least as it has been published in this country since 1926. Many, if not most of your favorite writers, editors and artists were shaped by their experience as fans; fandom's conventions are not only a place where you can meet some of these writers, editors and artists, but a place where you can join in a sense of community with people like yourself who also enjoy sf as you do. The criticism which may have informed your tastes in sf was probably generated by fandom (Damon Knight's seminal sf criticisms were not only published in part in fanzines, they were collected into book form by an ambitious fan publisher, Advent—the same publisher who also issued two books of criticism by James Blish and Alexei Panshin's *Heinlein in Dimension*, as well as Harry Warner's volume of fanhistory mentioned earlier), and conventions are still the favorite meeting places of those sf professionals who gather after-hours to talk shop and pick up new ideas and inspiration.

If there is anything which distinguishes a science fiction magazine from a paperback collection of new sf stories, I believe it is the sense of continuity and community which one can experience within its pages. We do more than publish science fiction here—we also discuss it and its backgrounds. Almost of necessity, this magazine is itself an extension of science fiction fandom: it is a place wherein you can gather with and meet—by proxy—others who share your love for science fiction. Not, I hope, in an exclusive, in-group sort of way, but as an open gathering, a forum of everyone who cares to join in: those who are content to read and think about what they have read, as

well as those who want to write in and discuss the stories and topics of the moment.

Perhaps inevitably, those who are most inclined to take advantage of the opportunity we offer to make their voices heard are those with some involvement in sf fandom, and the topics they discuss and the terms they use are exactly those which puzzled reader Zeldes. Equally, with my own background of long involvement in sf and fandom, I too will make references, on many occasions, to these same topics and terms.

This will not be to everyone's taste; those of you who find yourselves bored with or just uninterested with the inner workings of the sf community will still find, in our fiction, I think, reason enough to continue reading this magazine. The features can be ignored. But if the letters I receive are any indication at all, our unique features are a plus for most of you—an added stimulus to your enjoyment of sf.

At one time, most sf magazines devoted at least a brief column to fandom or fanzines; these perished about twenty years ago in the

great transition of the sf magazines from the pulp-magazine to the present digest-sized format, during which most of the non-fiction features were permanently banished.

We revived *The Clubhouse* in 1969 because we felt that such a column was needed in a modern sf magazine. For most of its history, *The Clubhouse* devoted itself to reviews of the fanzines, a service for which many of you have thanked us. For the past three issues we've devoted the column to the serialization of "The Enchanted Duplicator"—a *Pilgrim's Progress* of sf fandom written twenty years ago. It concludes this issue, and next issue *The Clubhouse* will devote itself once more to a survey of what's current in fan publications and, Ed Smith assures us, an occasional survey of the sf club scene as well. We offer this column to AMAZING's readers as a service. It exists to satisfy your curiosity about sf fandom and the inner community of sf; the use you make of it is purely your own choice.

—TED WHITE

BACK ISSUES S-F MAGAZINES

AMAZING & FANTASTIC (1963-1972), THRILLING S F, SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES, S F GREATS, STRANGE FANTASY, SPACE ADVENTURES, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES YEARBOOK—1972, THE STRANGEST STORIES EVER TOLD, SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS, WEIRD MYSTERY, SCIENCE FANTASY—Most issues available (60¢) plus 15¢ a copy to cover mailing costs. **ULTIMATE PUB. CO., BOX 7, Flushing, N.Y. 11364.**

A NOTICE TO OUR READERS: With this issue we have moved the cover date of **AMAZING SCIENCE FICTION** one month ahead—from **May** to **June**. The next issue of **FANTASTIC STORIES** will also be dated one month later than usual—from **June** to **July**. This was necessary due to the increasing lateness with which recent issues of these magazines have actually been put on sale—and the fact that our cover date is actually our off-sale date. No issues have been skipped, and all subscriptions will continue to be honored for their full length in terms of the number of issues subscribed for. Our next issue will be dated **August** and will be on sale 6/12.

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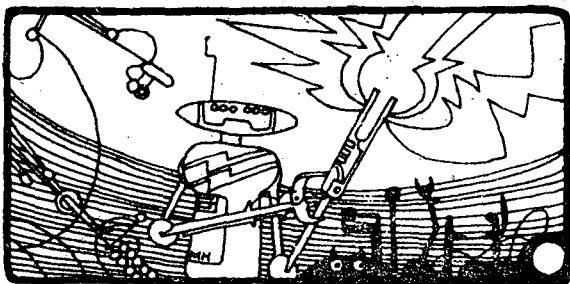
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...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet of paper, and addressed to Or So You Say, Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.

Dear Ted,

I've been exploring the pages of AMAZING for the length of my science fiction reading career, which is about five years. Not once have I submitted a letter to the "...or so you say" column. (I feel rotten inside!) After reading the November issue I decided that it was my turn to put my two cents in. NOTE: Even though I haven't been to the talked about "Lunacons" and "Worldcons" I still think of myself as a hard-core science fiction fan. (I pride myself in that.)

After carefully reading this month's stories I came to a conclusion—they're all good! The one that stuck in my mind was "Mere Anarchy" by William C. Johnstone. The reason this story stands out so is that I can identify it with today's world. So often I find myself being grouped into certain molds made by this horrible society. Mr. Johnstone really "tells it like it is" (if you will pardon the obsolete phrase!). Science fiction has come a long way since the "six-eyed monster" vs. "the boy wonder" sort of thing.

Would you like an opinion on this month's cover painting? I'm sure you do. I am not an art critic, but if I was, I'd say bravo for Don Davis for doing an excellent job. Even though it can't beat Virgil Finlay, it still reveals the "cardboard technological attitude" we hold today.

One question (please), if you haven't thrown this letter away yet. On the average, how many manuscripts make it out of the

"slush pile" into your magazine?

RON DOUGLAS
928 Central blvd.
Hayward, Calif., 94542

It's hard to guess an average, but I expect it works out to something like .75 stories per issue. In recent issues, "Lifeboat" by Karl T. Pflock, "Close Your Eyes And Stare At Your Memories" by A. G. Moran, "Night Shift" by George R. R. Martin and "Agony in the Garden" by Thomas F. Monteleone were all unsolicited submissions (or "slush pile" stories) from authors who were either unknown or not yet established at the time of submission.—TW

Dear Ted,

The November '72 issue of AMAZING was very good. From Don Davis's excellent cover to the conclusion of Greg Benford's "Jupiter Project," AMAZING was a delight to the eye.

I especially liked the reprint of Bob Shaw and Walt Willis's *The Enchanted Dupli-cator*. I'm also slightly pissed that the fact that you're running it in four parts, means that I will have to subscribe to your zine and probably to FANTASTIC as well.

Only complaint (and that really isn't one) is about the illo of The Can on the cover. If The Can spins to make artificial gravity, then the windows that dot the sides of the illustration are really on the floor of the space station.

Pvt. HUBERT C. DIXON III
413-90-1390, Co. D ISC #4
Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Ind. 46216

Dear Ted,

This is meant as a direct letter to you, but if you believe that it has something to do with the magazine, please print it.

I am not going to talk about "Christopher Street," its merits or lack of same; or of Sr. Hulvey's political views, but of my last two letters in AMAZING. Judging from your calm and lucid reply to Laurence Dielle's letter, and your faintly hysterical reply to mine in the Sept. ish, you seem to become much angrier at an affront to your political views than to direct attack at your magazine and editorship. In my first letter, I attempted to denounce "Christopher Street" as a badly written story, and I must have done a poor job at it, because the brunt of your reply was that your story was a good extrapolation, and that police are corrupt. I will be the first one to admit that many policemen *are* corrupt in the East, and I also think that I *am* qualified to pass judgement on this, as my former address for five years was 605 E. 82nd street. That's in New York, Ted. I still receive and read the Sunday NY Times, NY Magazine, and The Wall St. Journal. The rest of that reply defended the Kent State students, and damned the National Guard as a mindless, Fascistic SS type Corps. Well, I did not have the facts at that time, and I had thought this to be adequate enough as stated thusly: "... I am not convinced ... that the 4 martyred students ... are blameless." Again, the Editor chose to misunderstand, and chose to believe that I had a closed mind on the entire affair by putting "not blameless" in quotes. Now this is just personal opinion, but I believe that this changes my meaning not a little bit. This royally pissed me off, if I may use that colloquialism in your presence. I then wrote another letter to you, in which I tried calmly and informatively to teach you the error of your ways, and asking you to repent. When in the course of scribing this epistle, I made a grievous mistake, changing "blameless" in my letter to "innocent", two words so different, so opposite in meaning, so Diametrically Opposed, that I blush to think of it. Yet it

gave the Great White a perfect chance to perform the awesome *copout*, allowing him to reply in effect, "See heer, my boy, I am heartfully dismayed that you would accuse Me of falsifying quotations. Why, I Never said "not innocent" in my whole life, m'lad." Well Ted, I think that this is a pretty shabby thing to do. Brilliant, but shabby nonetheless. And that final jibe: "You might also check out the history of ... the extreme right-wing bias of both the LA and San Diego police." Well, Ted, from your address, I doubt very much if *you* are qualified to pass judgment here. I have no first hand experience with the LA police, but my contact with my police dept's officers have never been anything but polite, civil, and courteous. (And not just when I had my Sunday suit on and my hair slicked back either. I have talked with the cops with no more trouble when my hair was shaggy and I was wearing my dad's field jacket. We have got one of the youngest, sharpest and finest p.d.'s in the country, and for any one incident of bigotry toward anyone, there will be 5,000 normal incidents. 'Nuff said) I still love A & F, and will renew my sub when the time comes, but I was bugged by this incident, and I think an appy polly logy is in order. If you can find and use another *copout* in this letter, then one bastard will drown in a sea of mail. And this bastard isn't Peter Prescott. The Great Gamm makes no ominous noises in vain. Be so warned.

KEN GAMMAGE JR.
7865 East Roseland Dr.
La Jolla, CA., 92037

Ken, what you intend to write and what you do write are apparently two entirely different things, and I will not be held responsible by you for my failure to perceive your real intent when responding to what you have actually written. "In my first letter," you say, "I attempted to denounce 'Christopher Street' as a badly written story . . ." This may be what you had in mind, but I cannot find any references in your actual letter to the quality of the story

or its writing. In re-reading your letter in the September, 1972 issue (which, as you know, was published without cuts or changes), I find that your responses are entirely to David Hulvey's letter in the May issue and to my replies to that letter and to John Kusske's letter in the same issue. And the question of whether or not the story was badly written does not come up at all.

Further, your characterization of my comments on the National Guard at Kent State is wholly without foundation. I neither "defended the Kent State students" nor "damned the National Guard as a mindless, Fascistic SS type Corps." My entire comment on the subject was this: "The question of the national guardsmen at Kent State is a separate one and has been exhaustively researched and reported upon by, among others, James Michener. I commend his book to you. You need to read it if you really think that a student on his way to class who is shot down by a bullet in the back is 'not blameless'."

I'm sorry you feel that in condensing your actual phrase ("And I am not convinced, not by a long shot, that the 4 martyred students (to whom Harlan Ellison dedicated a book) are blameless.") To "not blameless" I changed your meaning; this was not my intention and it remains the way in which your actual statement reads to me.

You are still making errors in quoting yourself. You did not change "blameless" to "innocent." What you said was, "I have a more important gripe, however. It concerns a misquote in your comments to my letter: just two little words, but they changed my entire meaning. In quotes: 'not innocent', what I said: 'not convinced.' Two entirely different meanings." Indeed.

Now it seems to me that this sequence of "But I said . . ."s has gone far enough. I seriously suggest that you re-read what you actually wrote in the September and January issues, and then re-read my replies to your two letters. Then I think you will agree that you owe me an apology for the tone of this letter and the nature of your remarks about

me and my handling of your letters (which I find offensive and uncalled for).—TW

Dear Mr. White:

I feel that the people who keep rehashing the Kent State University deal are like the man stirring a manure pile: it increases the smell and does nothing constructive. As a member of the OARNG I have a faint idea of riot duty, though the only such I've done was in a place where in the asinine press terminology we *had* to be "issued loaded rifles." Namely, the State Pen in 1968 . . . where I carried a Thompson gun for the first time since 1941 . . .

A lot of people miss the point, that the KSU weekend was part of a batch of protests which had the entire ONG, Army and much of the Air Guard out as well. The ANG is not trained for ground combat or riot duty, but they had to be used. My unit, a large maintenance battalion, did duty at OSU in Columbus and OU at Athens during two calls in one week. At neither scene did anyone fire, though they got quite a bit of incoming rock, harmless stuff like what killed Goliath.

The Guard sent a group of men to KSU who had been on duty policing a wildcat strike by NE Ohio Teamsters and had been out for 3 days at the time. They were tired, a bit confused by the screeching and howling, and hungry to boot. The State forces being in an overextended condition, they were all that was loose. Two units from different battalions were involved, and the shooting was done by a group of less than 100 of these. I am not defending them, but I'd like to point out that only an idiot or a religious fanatic whose shaman has told him he's bulletproof will taunt armed men for any length of time. At the time I was traveling in Japan and asked some of the people from other countries on the tour what they thought. A couple of Aussies said it was sad, but had the just gripes of students been handled right in previous years, and the rabble rousers sat on, this would not have happened. A British veteran of Burma: "Regrettable. However,

in India, they would regard only 4 dead in a student riot as a minor thing. They have that many die in panics at festivals." A Guatemalan said that where a government does not apply moderate measures early, they may wind up doing far worse than KSU later. The general tone was that it was sad, preventable, and water under the bridge. I gather some of these people had been where student riots really get warm. For that I refer interested readers to Oriana Fallaci's book, titled *Nothing, and What Of It* or some similar name. She was in Mexico City during the student "riot" of 1968 a short time before the Mexican Olympics. Students were out, trying to get the Govt to spend cash on the poor instead of the sportsmen. She claimed it was quiet by usual standards, until Mexican Army men came in, set up heavy machine guns, and then opened fire. Official estimates claim 70 died, but others think it ran into the low hundreds, with many more than that wounded. Signorina Fallaci can speak with authority, as she was one of those hit. I found her book enlightening...

It is so damned easy to let off an accidental round, too. Could someone whose rifle was off safe have stumbled, while advancing backward? Or could some jolly student have let off an M80 firecracker? As a result of this, ONG units are now carrying non lethal riot sticks, which only kill people who are hit in the wrong place. And the back up includes high precision sniping rifles, which should be able to remove one sideburn at 100 yards without touching skin. *If so used.* Non-lethal weapons? There ain't no such animal.

Reader Deeter should note that the British cops are considering carrying guns, and they *do* carry nightsticks. And the British Army in Ulster is not armed with the products of Matty Mattel. The constant grind has caused some of the Limeys to work their rubber bullets over, weighting them with batteries or hardware, etc. This is hard on people who are hit. I have seen one TV shot of a woman who got hit across the face, and

I'd lay odds that she visited her dentist soon after, for complete upper and lower work. Non-lethal? It is to laugh. I dread the day of the paralysis beam which will be used every ten minutes....

JOHN P. CONLON

SSG OARNG.

52 Columbia Street

Newark, Ohio, 43055

What shocks most people about the deaths at Kent State, I think, is that at least three of the four victims were not involved in the actual riot, but were bystanders—students crossing the campus at some distance, on their way to class. It is hard to reconcile this with the self-serving stories put out by the National Guard and the authorities responsible for their presence at Kent State. In this and similar cases (particularly on black campuses in the south), the continued whitewash of the misuse of police powers and the resulting deaths of students (few if any proven to be provocateurs) serves only to alienate those of us who are horrified by such killings from the so-called Establishment that defends these actions as "necessary."—TW

Dear Ted,

Well, I've been back from Amsterdam since the middle of June of last year, but have been extremely busy with summer and academic theatre, and I'm just getting time to return to an occasional letter here and there. I have been buying AMAZING and FANTASTIC regularly, of course, missing only one or two issues while in Amsterdam itself. [Back issues are available from the Publisher....—TW]

And, at the risk of being again accused of harping on the same subject, I have to say a few things about the current visual appearance of the magazine. Needless to say, most of the recent covers have been superb, particularly Mike Hinge's work on the October FANTASTIC and January AMAZING. Back when his work first started appearing, you raved madly about his upcoming covers,

predicting a totally "new look" in magazine covers. These were high-sounding words, but having seen the material you raved about, I can't help but agree with you. His covers function not only as excellent cover art themselves, but stand out violently from everything else on a newstand.

Unfortunately, this has seemed to come with a simultaneous decline in interior artwork. As *Analog* has been continually improving in this area, with some superb recent interior work from Schoenherr, Gaughan, DiFate, and others, most of the interior artwork here has recently been of surprisingly poor quality. Since Jeff Jones left—only temporarily, I hope—there's been a woeful lack of decent interior work. Perhaps Jeff found the trick to doing effective work within the necessary restrictions of that half-page strip. But look through the January *AMAZING*—I can't find a single decent piece of work there; even Joe Staton, whose fan-nish work I've always enjoyed, has a totally forgettable full page. I think I'm aware of the exigencies of doing magazine illustration compared to the freedom of fanart—but you, as an excellent designer and art critic, must see how mediocre all this work is! Can nothing be done about it?

In your editorial, you discuss among other things the newly-adopted ruling to award best editor rather than best magazine Hugos, and predict a possible victory for Roger Elwood, simply on the basis of a large number of upcoming anthologies. This is certainly possible, but I would tend to doubt it. Instead, I would guess that the category will be dominated by the more "visible" editors—those whose personalities are clear and obvious in their work, and of whom the fans are really *aware* as editors. Elwood, for all the good work he may do, has so far been essentially faceless; no one has spoken about an "Elwood-style" anthology or collection, because so far this is none such. No; I think the leading contenders right now would probably be you and Harlan Ellison. You're certainly the most communicative of current magazine editors; through your long edi-

torials and detailed lettercolumn comments, everyone knows the editor of *A/F*. Good as the magazine is, who knows Ed Ferman, editor of *F&SF*? And Harlan, of course, is probably the most notable editor around, with his introductions in *Again, Dangerous Visions* often longer than the stories they introduce. I think you're being a bit unrealistic in disliking this change—the day of magazine sf is over, Ted. This doesn't mean that the magazines will or should die off entirely, and I certainly wouldn't want this. But the day when the magazines formed the dominant influence on the field are certainly gone. Paperback and hardcover originals, and the original anthologies and paperback magazines have come to dominate the field in the last couple of years, and this is something we've all realized. The original anthologies only deserve at least parity with the magazines in terms of awards, and it would seem to me that this Hugo change is perhaps the best possible way to achieve this end.

Oh—and the idea of best nominees placing second was a very astute observation it seems, at least in the fan categories. One major exception—"A Clockwork Orange", I think, was easily the best in the dramatic presentation category, while "Andromeda Strain" which finished second didn't even deserve a place on the ballot.

I know this may be too early to ask, but what so far has been the reader reaction to "The Enchanted Duplicator"? In *FANTASTIC*, you did previously reprint fanzine material, but that was primarily straight writing about sf and/or fandom. Have most of the letters so far enjoyed this classic bit of pure fannish writing? I've enjoyed rereading it myself, even though I have the recent Katz edition. And unless I'm mistaken, haven't you added some additional explanatory footnotes to Arnie's? Even for an active fan, your notes clear up a few unclear points. [*For better or worse, all the footnotes are mine.*—TW]

I have to mention Cy Chauvin's work here, which seems to get better with each

issue. His reviews, which seem (or is it just the surroundings?) much better than his fan-ish writing, have become concise and informative, and highly enjoyable. While we're on that, I'm eagerly awaiting Ed Smith's first fanzine review column; I'm very interested in what Ed will say about the current somewhat moribund fanzine scene.

The lettercolumn—amazing! I remember the *Look* review of the book version of *The Andromeda Strain* very well, being extremely annoyed by it; I commented at that time in a couple of fanzines. Perhaps I should have guessed that the same idiot was responsible for the more recent *Newsweek* slur. I only wish I could find that review now; I remember that it was infuriating to the *n*th degree. I do recall that Prescott called *Andromeda Strain*, certainly one of the worst major sf novels of the decade, "certainly the best sf written in the last ten years", and heaped similar praise on it. Frankly, I'm amazed Mark's letter got any reply, no less a personal letter. Neither my letter to *Look*, nor my more recent one to *Newsweek*, seemed to produce any response at all. It was particularly illuminating not to read any opposing letters in *Newsweek*, because I know a number of major sf people must have written, but the magazine saw fit to allow only Prescott's opinions in print.

I'll venture an unpopular opinion, now—I for one would *rather* see a portfolio than another short story, although in turn I would rather see longer features (fanzine reviews, editorial, book reviews, letters, or a combination of all of them) than either. But with all the original anthologies being published, there really is a massive input of new short fiction around. One doesn't get much chance, particularly if one is under 30 and thus doesn't have a large collection of very old prozines, to see some of Grand Old classic artists and artwork. The fiction, if it's any good at all, is always reprinted, as with Doc Smith's ever-popular Lensman series. But it's very difficult to get ahold of the artwork used, and I would much rather see that than another mediocre short story. And I'd

prefer additional feature material to either portfolios or fiction. . . but then, that's why I'm active in fandom, precisely because I enjoy the material.

Ted—why were you too proud to mention *Egoboo*, the magazine you co-edit with John, in answer to Bob Ellis' question? I know you probably want to limit circulation, but since you've been so honest with readers in every other aspect, why shy away here? John Berry will certainly be appearing in his own fanzine!

The parallel Michael Deeter discusses between the Kent State case and the Boston Massacre is an excellent point, and one I hadn't come across before. In both cases, a bunch of civilians were taunting military personnel; in Boston they threw snowballs, in Ohio (possibly) a few rocks. In both cases, the soldiers fired on the civilians, killing several of them. But the British were the *bad* guys, and so we call the Boston incident the Boston "Massacre". American soldiers would never kill without cause—so it was the fault of the civilians in Kent State. Very good, Michael. It all fits the American current psyche very well; if we do it, it's good. If "they" do it, it's bad; I wonder what the explanation for Kissenger's "Peace is at hand" lie and the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam will be?

Anyway, Ted, keep up the good work, and don't let my carping comments get in the way; I know you would get better interior artwork if you could, and I'm really only writing to let you know you have at least one reader who does care about such things.

JERRY W. LAPIDUS
54 Clearview Drive
Pittsford, N.Y., 14534

Egoboo is a limited-circulation fanzine published for a controlled mailing list (which John D. Berry handles), and for that reason has never been mentioned in The Clubhouse and was not mentioned in my reply to Bob Ellis' letter. As you know, not every fanzine editor wants the burden of a larger cir-

culatation and even a Hugo-winner like Yandro has been declared by its editors to be off-limits to reviewers. *Pride* has nothing to do with it.—TW

Dear Mr. White,

The January issue of AMAZING was up to its usual high standards, but I must implore you to pay closer attention to some minor details in the design of the magazine. Since you took over the editorial helm of both AMAZING and FANTASTIC the overall contents and packaging have improved greatly. The constant experimentation must be a strain. My big complaint is about the style of lettering used for the titles on the cover of the January issue. Those skinny, close capitals just don't make it. The "I's" disappear into the other letters and make the titles look uneven and misspelled. "NIGHT SHIFT," for instance looks like "NGHT SHFT" and the same applies to other words where vertical letters seem to blend into each other. The word "Memories" is totally unreadable.

It seems to me that you would be better off leaving the titles off the cover completely. They don't really tell anybody anything. Regular readers and science fiction people will probably buy the magazine anyway and perspective new readers would probably find them pretentious. New readers are more likely to be attracted by the excellent artwork your covers usually sport, and the more space you give that, the better. Granted, the titles are probably helpful to collectors; but they could be pacified if you printed a list of the authors either on the spine or the *bottom* of the cover. Then, instead of ignoring the more than two inches of type at the top of the cover, the public would be hit in the eye by an enticing beacon of day-glo artwork peaking from behind the current issues of *True Supernatural* or *Army Laffs*.

As a quick conclusion (because I'm dictating this letter over the telephone), I enjoyed the January issue; I thought the aforementioned "Night Shift" was the best

of the lot; the features were great as usual, especially the tachyon article.

EDWARD J. HANNIGAN
8 Laurel Place
Glenridge, N.Y. 07028

It is the policy of these magazines—and one I am not in a position to change—to include all the stories (both titles and authors) on the upper part of the cover of each issue. My function is to do this as attractively as possible. Closely-spaced type is currently in the vogue, but I think you're right: I overdid it on the January cover. How do you like the covers on the March issue and this issue?—TW

Dear Ted,

You're doing a great service to fans by reprinting "The Enchanted Duplicator" in AMAZING, because now this classic will never be a hard to find collector's item again. It's particularly ironic to see this story in a prozine, because it has always been held up, whenever someone cared to argue about the value of fiction in fanzines, as the one story that no prozine could ever print.

I'm sure you've heard the jokes about AMAZING being the world's biggest fanzine. Perhaps they're not entirely jokes. While I would like to see fanzine reprints in your magazines (perhaps a revival of the "Fantasy Fandom" feature) I think I should also add a word of caution. AMAZING is *not* a fanzine. Don't make it so that it is genuinely only comprehensible by the five hundred or so hard core fans. Being one of that five hundred myself I can't really say what the non-fannish reader is making of all this, but as you've been getting more and more personal and "fannish" in your approach, I can't help but wonder if the general reader might not be getting a little lost. This magazine seems to be edited for the *fans*, rather than the general reader, and while I am glad to see this as a fan, I am also aware that it could cost you some of your desperately needed readership. It is indeed a

good idea to represent fandom, and allow people to make contact with fandom through the magazine; make sure you keep things in proportion and remember that there aren't enough fans to support any commercial enterprise, including this one. Don't let the fannishness take over completely.

The stories this issue strike me as below par. Eklund's "The Ascending Aye" is simply dull, because it is populated with a lot of dull little people who never come to life for an instant, and all talk in the same rigid manner almost totally devoid of contractions. Eklund has to brush up on dialogue considerably. I noticed how wooden the speech of the characters was very quickly. If one person talks in a very flat, subject verb object manner, saying "It is" instead of "It's" all the time, this is perhaps a quirk. However, if a lot of people do it, like all the characters in the story, it is simply bad writing. It rings false. People don't talk that way. I haven't seen such unconvincing dialogue since *Bug Jack Barron*, wherein Spinrad had people from vastly different backgrounds and on both sides of the generation gap using the same slang.

Furthermore, the plot of the story doesn't amount to much. Yes it is surrealistic, but the thing about effective surrealism is that it's got to mean something. It can't be just pretty pictures. All this boils down to is a variant on the old psychic vampire story, a'la *Weird Tales* c. 1933. Quite a bit is left up in the air, even on the most rudimentary levels. What was Marlen? How did the invading armies know she was there? If they knew what she was, where she was, and what she was capable of doing, it follows that her kind are commonplace, at least to the extent that the invaders have encountered such things before. This is not at all reflected in the story. It strikes me as implausible that such a creature could gain such a position of social eminence, without anyone knowing anything about her, while the foreign invader knew everything. When examined closely this whole story collapses completely, and hasn't sufficient redeeming alle-

gorical value to hold the illogical storyline together.

"Night Shift" is the best thing in the issue. Martin is showing considerable promise, and you should get more stories by him. This thing presents a very believable picture of the kind of domesticated future that Alexei Panshin writes about in the Dec. FANTASTIC, a story about *people* in the world of the Big Idea. There doesn't have to be any sweeping plot, only a presentation of a future with the statement—"This is how it feels". Which is what science fiction is all about.

My immediate reaction to "Link" is the question *why?* Why was this thing printed? It is pulp magazine filler, a rehash of stale ideas, badly handled (those aliens think and act just like human beings), and more typical of the AMAZING of Ray Palmer than yours. [*Perhaps because it was in our inventory for several years.*—TW]

The Moran story is promising for a first effort, though it seems to get a little overly mystical at the end. The transition from the intense realism of the opening sections just doesn't work. Also, the author may have thought it clever to name a totalitarian-like organisation NATSI ("Nazi", get it?), but it's not. Only contrived.

I'm sure you're going to get lots of irate letters about the Malzberg "On Ice". There was someone at the Philadelphia SF club who claimed that this story was hardcore pornography without redeeming social merit, and suggested we all write protesting letters about its presence. (Also next month there will be a panel discussion on the story.) Personally I don't think it is real live porno. It is, however, dreadful fiction. Subject matter aside, it is absolutely identical to the hundred of nameless pieces which have been used as *Analog* filler for the last decade. It is neo-Gernsbackian pseudo-fiction, an essay in the guise of a story. Not people in the world of the Big Idea but merely the Big Idea itself, alone and unadorned. There is no real attempt to develop the fictional values of plot and character, only a few ramifications of the idea that could someday be

usable as part of a story. There is nothing in this "story" that couldn't be as easily expressed in an essay. Malzberg probably thought he was being very modern and Controversial, merely because of his sexual subject matter, but in fact he has again dredged up the hoariest science fiction blunder of them all. The Gernsback Delusion is not dead. It has merely been sexually liberated.

This is not a very good showing for the entire issue. You've done better many times before, and I hope this isn't the start of a downward trend.

In closing I'd like to point out to Mark Mumper in the lettercol, that the ignorance of critics like Prescott is merely that—ignorance—and is more *his* problem than ours. We know better, and nothing more can be said. One bigoted reviewer isn't going to harm the field any. SF is selling better than ever and carried by many mass circulation slicks (e.g. *Playboy*) and published in hardcover by major trade publishers. It's too well entrenched to be damaged by a few critical squeals now. Besides, no one has ever proved that reviewers have much influence on publishing anyway.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Rd.
Strafford, Pa. 19087

Of Course (Cont. from page 23)

... Their own evaluation (which they maintain is a *joke, of course*) of the end results of this computation and its implementation is that it is *intended* to keep them from getting an unfair advantage (poor 'game' condition) over themselves—to manipulate the game probabilities so as to handicap their conscious activities in favor of their unconscious activities. . . . If they themselves consider their conscious abilities so powerful that they must handicap them in order to maintain a

No, but they occasionally influence publishers—especially those who have never quite understood what anyone sees in that science fiction stuff anyway, and who assign the sf books they publish to their most junior editors. Your reaction to "The Ascending Aye" is a matter of taste and one I won't argue with, but in paging through the story again just to refresh my memory, I found the dialogue to be by no means as wooden as you characterize it: Contractions abound. However, it is my impression that Gordon was trying to suggest a subtly European atmosphere—both in locale and in speech patterns. What you missed was current-day American slang. As for turning AMAZING (or FANTASTIC) into "the world's biggest fanzine," fear not. The backbone of this magazine is its fiction. But, as I mention in my editorial, it is also my purpose to involve the readers of this magazine in a sense of community with each other—to create, if you will, a broader, more diffuse community than "hard core" fandom, but one which shares its love for science fiction and its willingness to explore some of the behind-the-scenes aspects of sf. That is the primary purpose of the features, which I hope are as enjoyable for all our readers as they are for you. —TW

game with their unconscious activities, we should be, of course, powerless against them if they should ever oppose us consciously. . . .

... Of course I must recommend no further contact with this race; as we, of course, have no such abilities. Semantic and mathematical evaluation of their word 'luck' (see B. B. Jones' report on 'human' semantics) will, of course, prove the validity of my recommendation. . . .

—BETSY-CURTIS

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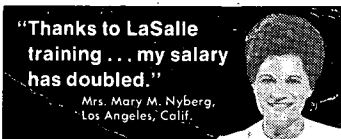
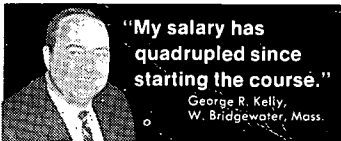
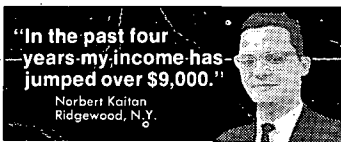
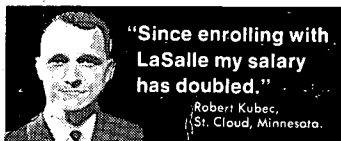
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